

Alternative Visions: An Exploration of Inter-racial and/or Inter-cultural Same-sex Relationships

by

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**Abstract.**

This thesis explored the lived experiences and gained a deeper understanding of the impact that racism and homonegativity had on those who have been in or who are currently part of an inter-racial and/or inter-cultural (both partners are perceived as Black but come from different ethnic backgrounds) same-sex relationship. The research was carried out using a social constructionist theoretical framework. Semi-structured interviews and electronic questionnaires were used to gather the empirical data and thematic analysis was used in order to identify themes within the data.

The participants' accounts shed insight into the constraints that still surround inter-racial and/or inter-cultural same-sex relationships. I conclude that not only do racism and homonegativity have a tremendous impact on individuals but there were specific types of homonegativity and racism that were specific to the types of individuals involved in inter-racial and/or inter-cultural same-sex relationships. My findings highlight the need to address such issues.

### **Dedication.**

This dissertation is dedicated to the loving memory of my mom, whose love and support for me knew no bounds. I also dedicate this thesis to my dad, who has not only funded my studies but, whose love, support and strength continues to encourage me.

“As a *mestiza* I have no country, my homeland cast me out; yet all countries are mine because I am every woman’s sister or potential lover. (As a lesbian I have no race, my own people disclaim me; but I am all races because there is the queer of me in all races.) I am cultureless because, as a feminist, I challenge the collective cultural/religious malederived beliefs of Indo-Hispanics and Anglos; yet I am cultured because I am participating in the creation of yet another culture, a new story to explain the world and our participation in it, a new value system with images and symbols that connect us to each other and to the planet. *Soy un amasamiento*, I am an act of kneading, of uniting, and joining that not only has produced both a creature of darkness and a creature of light, but also a creature that questions the definitions of light and dark and gives them new meanings” (Anzaldua, 1987:80-81).

### **Acknowledgements.**

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my supervisors, Dr Charlotte Ross and Dr Nicki Ward for their continued support and encouragement.

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## **Glossary.**

Brief Relationships	Refers to relationships that have lasted for under a year.
Homonegativity	Negative attitudes towards homosexuality.
LGBT	An acronym that refers to Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender communities.
LGBTQ community	Refers to the White-dominated LGBTQ community within Western cultures.
Longer-term Relationships	Refers to relationships that have lasted for over a year.
People of Colour	Is a collective term to describe non-Europeans.
Queer	In this research, queer is used as an umbrella to describe all gender and sexual minorities.
Racism	Refers to an ideology as well as system of oppression that privileges the White 'race'.

White Supremacy

Refers to the political, cultural and economic system which continues to be used as a form of domination to uphold the white 'race'



## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

Political activist Arundhati Roy once asserted, “there's really no such thing as the 'voiceless'. There are only the deliberately silenced, or the preferably unheard (2004).” This quote accurately captures why this dissertation was written. Inter-racial and/or inter-cultural (both partners are perceived as Black but come from different ethnic backgrounds) same-sex relationships are an under researched phenomenon within academic literature.

Although, sexuality has been an important aspect of social enquiry (Rahman and Jackson, 2010; Richardson, 2000), Fish (2012) and Barnard (2008) note that the experiences of queer people of colour have been missed from research, with studies of sexuality failing to capture the experience of communities of colour and research into communities of colour failing to explore issues of queer sexualities (Collins, 2000; Kuntsman and Miyake, 2008). The failure to detail these types of relationships can perpetuate a myth that the relationships are non-existent. Marginalised identities are placed at the centre of this research which means rare areas of enquiry will be explored. Black feminism has informed my research; this theoretical approach has enabled me to examine the intersections of oppression.

I argue that both racism and homonegativity are both legacies of European Colonialism, which inform the ways in which individuals in inter-racial and/or inter-cultural same-sex relationships are regarded. It is important to stress the fact that Black history did not start with slavery, but European Colonialism has and still continues to shape dominant narratives about the modern world and in the context of this research, inter-racial and/or inter-cultural same-sex relationships.

When inter-racial and/or inter -cultural relationships are studied, they are frequently researched within a heterosexual framework (See for example: Alibhai-Brown and Montague, 1992; Fanon, 2008) which results in the marginalisation of same-sex relationships. Furthermore, research tends to use a Black/White binary (see for example; Fanon, 2008; Steinbugler, 2012). I would suggest that this is because Black/White couples have been more examined in the context of European Colonialism. Using a Black/White binary can be interpreted as accepting a Eurocentric view; this research moves away from such a framework as this erases the experiences of people of colour who do not fit into such a context.

There are problematic levels of both homonegativity and racism in society; hate crimes are endemic within the United Kingdom. Hate crimes can be defined as crimes motivated by prejudice, 'the most common motivating factor in hate crimes recorded by the police (85%)

was race, with 35,885 offences recorded in 2012/13. The second most common factor was sexual orientation (10%), with 4,267 offences' (Home Office et al, 2013:7). what is less known, is the impact that racism and homonegativity can have on an inter-racial and/ or inter-cultural same-sex couple. This research explores the experiences, and gains a deeper understanding of the impact that racism and homonegativity may have on those who are currently in, or who have previously been in, an inter-racial and/or inter-cultural same-sex relationship. It is important to note that the study is mainly focussed in the United Kingdom and the United States.

The main research questions addressed in this study are:

- To what extent do racism and homonegativity impact on the relationships of inter-racial and/or inter-cultural same -sex couples?
- To what extent do people from different racial/ethnic groups, ages and social classes experience homonegativity and racism differently?
- Does the length of the relationship result in different experiences of racism and homonegativity?

The research will provide valuable insights into the experiences and needs of people in inter-racial and/ or inter-ethnic same-sex relationships.

The overall structure of the thesis takes the form of seven chapters.

Chapter two explores an overview of the literature. As the literature on inter-racial and/or inter-cultural same-sex relationships is very limited, I examine racism and homonegativity separately, although there will be overlaps, I then relate them back to European Colonialism and examine the two main contemporary studies devoted to such relationships. I argue that racism and homonegativity are legacies of European Colonialism.

Chapter three details and justifies the methodological approach, as well as the process of analysis, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were used in order to undertake the research, questionnaires were used to gather a large amount of data on a hidden population in a short time period and semi-structured interviews were used to gather further data about the participants. Thematic analysis was used to analysis the data, this enabled me to identify patterns and trends among the participant's responses.

The next section is based on the findings and discussion; I use the findings to demonstrate how racism and homonegativity impacts the lives of those in inter-racial and/or inter-cultural same- sex relationships. I use two overarching themes racism and homonegativity and then a number of subthemes. Finally I conclude, discuss the limitations and recommend further areas of research. My intent here is not to speak on behalf of marginalised inter-racial and/or inter-cultural same-sex

relationships, but to use research as a platform to let such experiences be heard.



## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of the literature exploring inter-racial and/or inter-cultural same-sex relationships. Exploring the historical context of such relationships will help understand contemporary constructions. This literature review is structured around key themes which are pertinent to and reflect the lived experiences of inter-racial and intercultural same- sex couples. The literature has been reviewed by theme, the chapter has two main headings has been written in the following order: Racism and Ethnicity, Homosexuality and Sexuality, it is important to note that there will be overlaps; this will be followed by a summary of the chapter. I argue that both racism and homonegativity are legacies of European Colonialism which affect contemporary inter-racial and/or inter-cultural same-sex relationships.

### **Racism and Ethnicity**

There is a consensus among social scientists that race is a social construction (Mills, 1997; Lewis, 2000; Gilroy, 2002). The biological understandings of 'race' can be traced back to European Colonialism (Quijano, 2000). According to Barkan (1992), 'race was perceived to be a biological category, a natural phenomenon unaffected by social forces (p. 2).' Eurocentrism in the West underpinned scientific knowledge which led to scientific racism which emerged as a tool to justify slavery, and

the dehumanisation and slaughter of many people from the African diaspora. While it is important to note that slavery has always existed, it was never based on skin colour (Alexander, 1987; Snowden, 1991).

In common Western discourses on 'race', Whiteness is constructed as superior, moral and pure, and this is oppositional to Blackness, which is constructed as violent, immoral and dangerous (Davis, 1981; hooks, 1995; Alexander, 2010; Muhammad, 2010). In other words, Whiteness as a social construction is dependent upon Blackness, in order to uphold its superiority. As a result many White people receive unrecognised privileges (McIntosh, 1988, Frankenburg, 1993, Delgado and Stefaniec, 1997), which has come to be known as White privilege.

Whiteness is embodied differently depending on other intersectional social identities, such as class and sexual orientation. Whiteness is also constantly changing. For instance, historically, the Irish were not considered White (Ignatiev, 1995), and faced systematic oppression from the British, over the 19th and 20th century. This goes with the premise that there is a history of racisms (please see: Hall, 1988; Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992; Gilroy, 2002; Lee and Lutz, 2005; Sivanandan, 2006; Garner, 2010). However, in the US, the Irish collaborated with the Europeans in the continued oppression of Black Individuals in order to demonstrate their loyalty to 'Whiteness' (Ignatiev, 1995).

I argue that this provided the Irish with a false sense of superiority over people of colour. It is important that we need to move beyond the Black/White binary as 'race' and ethnicity are much more complex (see for example, Ignatiev, 1995; Brodtkin, 1999; Alibhai-Brown, 2001;; Gulielmo and Salerno, 2003; Oifekwunigwe, 2004; Roediger, 2006). Moreover, it erases other racialised experiences. Racist constructions not only impact the ways in which people are perceived and treated within their daily lives, but also determines the type of people that they form relationships with.

It is widely believed in contemporary Western mainstream society that racism is simply a matter of racial hatred (hooks, 1984), I argue that racism is a lot more complex. Racism is both, an ideology and system, this global system is commonly referred to as White supremacy, in this research, White supremacy will refer to the political, cultural and economic global system which continues to be used as a form of domination to uphold the White 'race'. Similar definitions have been deployed by scholars such as hooks, (1984), Delgado and Stefancic, (1997), Mills, (1997), Gillborn, (2005).

Mills (1997) eloquently argues that White supremacy can also be considered as part of the *racial contract* which separates White people from people of colour. While I am in agreement with the main argument, I would take his analysis a step further to argue that this racial contract

has become much more complex as people of colour can also uphold White supremacist thinking, which is why the term White supremacy is preferred, as hooks asserts:

“white supremacy” is a much more useful term for understanding the complicity of people of color in upholding and maintaining racial hierarchies that do not involve force (i.e slavery, apartheid) ...The term “white supremacy” enables us to recognize not only that black people are socialized to embody the values and attitudes of white supremacy, but we can exercise “white supremacist control” over other black people” (1989: 113).

hooks discusses White supremacy within an American context.

However, it would be useful to broaden this discussion, as White supremacy has been recognised as a global system (Daniels, 1997; Mills, 1997; Rabaka, 2007; Lake and Reynolds, 2008) and should be analysed as such. There are many examples that can testify to this, for instance, institutionalised racial segregation such as Apartheid (1948-1994) in South Africa (Clark and Warger, 2011). America also had miscegenation laws which criminalised inter-racial (heterosexual) marriage as well as sexual relationships between White people and people of colour, these laws were known as Jim Crow (Alexander, 2010). Although, the United Kingdom had no official laws criminalising inter-racial unions, the 1905 Aliens Act, was implemented to control immigration, its main objective was to deter Jewish immigrations from entering the country (Glover, 2012; 80).

Racism can be overt or covert and also unconscious and conscious, racism continues to evolve change with contemporary times, racism is

so pervasive that it is often described as subtle, however, for this research, normative racism will be used, as the effects of such racism, is anything but subtle (hooks, 1981, 1995; Du Bois, 1994; Drexler, 2007), and has a damaging impact the well-being of the individual being victimised (hooks, 1981; Drexler, 2007). An example of normative racism can include feelings of exclusion in White-dominated spaces. Social spaces have been recognised as being 'raced' as a way to displace bodies perceived as 'Other' (Held and Leach, 2008). Kuntsman and Miyake (2008) refer to these feelings as being 'Out of Place'.

### Islamophobia

Islamophobia has been described as a form of racism (Maddood, 2005; IHRC, 2013; Leon, 2012) and is pervasive in society (Allen, 2010), particularly since the events of September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 (known as 9/11 in America) in the US (Sheridan, 2006). Islamophobia will be defined as an irrational fear, hatred and prejudice of Islam or Muslims. Sheridan (2006) conducted research on Muslims within the United Kingdom and found 'significant increases in both implicit and more overt negative experiences on the basis of their race and religion' (p.334). Also, 'the sample reported that they were regularly ignored, overlooked, stared at, surveyed, insulted, treated with suspicion, and physically attacked (ibid).' Western gay and lesbian discourses are often Islamophobic. An significant essay that highlighted Islamophobia was *Gay Imperialism*:

*gender and Sexuality Discourse in the 'War on Terror'* Haritaworn, Tauqir and Erdem (2008) critiqued Outrage, a London based White-dominated queer organisation, on their undercurrent of Islamophobia, which continually depicts Islam as inherently homonegative. Ultimately, Islamophobia discourses in queer spaces silences the experiences of queer Muslims.

Since social attitudes on 'race' have shifted (Alexander, 2010), it is commonly suggested that we live in a colour-blind society and inter-racial couples of all sexual orientations are seen as representatives of this ideology (Steinbugler, 2012). I argue that colour-blindness is a form of racism, using a colour-blind ideological approach in the context of inter-racial/and/or inter-cultural individualises racial problems for such relationships, while ignoring the power and privilege dynamic that is reflected in larger society, which is still regulated by racialised boundaries.

### Race' Traitors

Anyone who is perceived as being disloyal to their 'race' can be deemed as being a race traitor, particularly by friends and family. This can add a huge pressure on those who are part of an inter-racial and/or inter-cultural relationship. This could deter individuals from getting involved in such relationships, but the extent to which has rarely been examined in academia. Similarly, 'mixed race' individuals (who have racially mixed heritage) can also be considered race traitors, irrespective of their marital status and are often pressured into picking a side of their ancestry (Phoenix and Tizard, 2002; Root, 1996). I argue that this type of thinking is based on a colonial ideological notion of 'race' and I am in agreement with Segrest (1994) when she asserts, it's not my people, it's the idea of race I am betraying (p.4). Segrest (1994) was described as a 'race traitor' by her family and describes how her anti-racist work has estranged her from her US based family who were members of the Ku Klux Klan. The notion of 'race' traitors reflect the white supremacist state; people are willing to disown family members who challenge dominant colonial constructions on 'race'.

### Racism by Association

Not only are individuals deemed 'race' traitors, but in the context of inter-racial and/or inter-cultural same-sex relationships, partners can also be subjected to abuse due to being associated with someone of a different 'race', this is known as racism by association. I argue that this is a white supremacist tactic to keep individuals from crossing the racial boundary. Racism by association is something that Britain has recognised and has implemented into the Equality Act (2010). Very little has been written on the subject within Western academia, but this is an area that will be addressed in this research. I hypothesise that in the context of inter-racial and/or inter-cultural same-sex relationships, White privilege means White people experience a lot less racism outside of said relationships.

### Racialised Desire

Earlier in the chapter (p.8), it was stated that historically, races were to be kept separate, I would suggest that this in part made inter-racial intimacy of all kinds' taboo. When an issue becomes taboo, the forbidden nature of the taboo can become appealing (Riedell 2007:



140). In this section, racism will be discussed within a sexual context. Racialised desire is constructed through racial borders and can be seen as an erotic longing for a certain 'race', which is based on tired sexual stereotypes that can be traced back to European Colonialism (ibid). This research is in agreement with Holland (2012), who contends that some desires are embedded in racism. hooks identified this type of desire as 'eating the other', and asserts:

'when race and ethnicity become commodified as resources for pleasure, the culture of specific groups, as well the bodies of individuals, can be seen as constituting an alternative playground where members of dominating races, genders, sexual practices affirm their power- over in intimate relations with the Other' (1992: 23).

An explicit example of race and ethnicity becoming commodified as resources of pleasure is sex tourism. Sex tourism will be defined as a 'term to describe the activities of individuals who...use their economic power to attain power of sexual command over local women, men and/or children while travelling for leisure purposes' (O'Connell Davidson, 1998:75).

In an influential essay entitled *Fantasy Islands: Exploring the Demand for Sex Tourism*, O'Connell Davidson and Taylor (1999) argue that Sex Tourism can be seen as Fantasy Islands where Western tourists go to experience their privileges. I am in agreement with O'Connell Davidson and Taylor (1999), who assert that sex tourism centres on power relations and exploitation. This is evident in the fact that mainly Western White heterosexuals are identified as being sex tourists. O'Connell

Davidson and Taylor (1999) also add that sex tourists 'can reduce other human beings to nothing more than the living embodiments of masturbatory fantasies. In short, sex tourists can experience in real life a world very similar to that offered in fantasy to pornography users' (p.53).

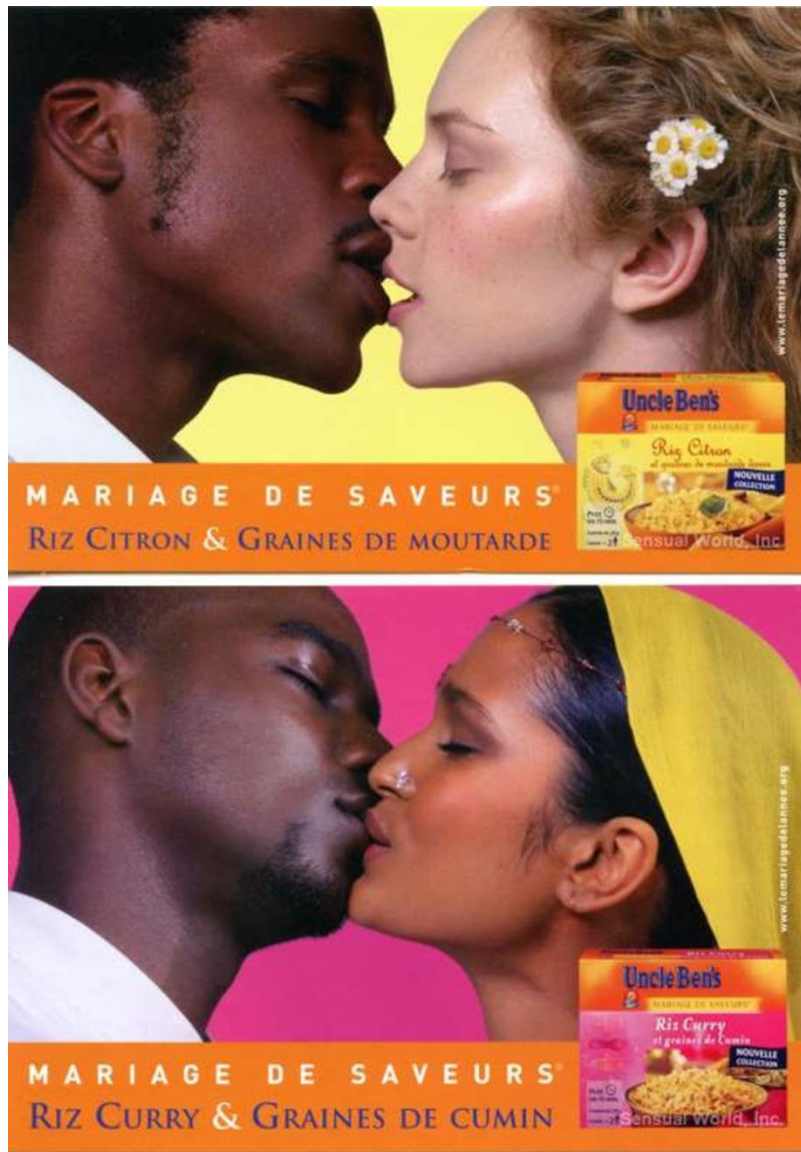
Sex tourism can be seen as evolving from European Colonialism, as the colonizers set up regulated brothels for the European army (Bhaskaran, 2002). I am in agreement with Brennan (2004) when she suggests that notions of 'race', gender and sexuality has evolved from colonialist thought. Sex tourism is not just limited to heterosexuals. Research conducted by Padilla (2007) suggests that Western White gay men travel to places such as Dominican Republic for sex with local native men.

I would add that 'eating the other' is not just limited to members from dominate groups reaffirming their power, but as White supremacist thinking also affects people of colour then I would hypothesise that people of colour may racialize their partners. This is an aspect that is missing from academic literature, but an aspect which will be addressed in this research.

Racialised desire has been discussed in individual context, but inter-racial relationships are often reduced to the sexual aspect by larger society, and this is reflected in cultural representations. Like Hall (1997),

I argue that cultural representations are important sites of inquiry, as they can reflect cultural values. hooks supports this view and adds that 'the field of representation remains a place of struggle (1992:3)', Following Hooks insight, I would suggest that this is evident in the context of inter-racial and/or inter-cultural relationships, as representations can be seen as a site of struggle for such relationships to be seen as other than sexual, This is evident in a recent Uncle Ben's French advertisement:

Figure 1. Uncle Ben's advertisement.



In the context of this advertisement, race and ethnicities are seen as flavours, Mariage de Saveurs translates as weddings of flavours. The couple above represent lemon rice and mustard seeds and the couple below represent curried rice and cumin seeds. This advertisement

reduces inter-racial heterosexual couples to flavours, in order to sell a product. In this context, I would suggest that inter-racial couples of all sexual orientations struggle to be seen as something other than a sexual commodity. Although, an example featuring inter-racial heterosexual couples was used, racialized desire is not just limited to inter-racial heterosexual couples, as Western academic studies have shown (Plummer, 2007; Riedell, K. 2007). Further research is needed to document whether racialised desire is prominent within inter-racial and/or inter-cultural same-sex relationships between women.

Even in mainstream LGBT publications, representation can be deemed as quite problematic. Recently, *Diva*, one of the most popular lesbian, bisexual and queer magazines in the United Kingdom, published an article by local London artist Ope Lori entitled 'Eye Have the Power (2011)' Lori uses pictures to examine and deconstruct racial and gender representations in particular she uses White bodies against Black bodies. Lori argues that social constructions have led to the creation of a hierarchy of models of beauty, where White women lead and Black women are seen as undesirable, particularly those with darker skin. While there is literature acknowledging that in a White supremacist society, white women are perceived as the most desirable (hooks, 1981), I would suggest that the issues around beauty are more nuanced. For instance, there is a specific type of White woman that is seen as most desirable- the young, heterosexual, White, thin, able-bodied woman. Lori

stated that she wanted to deconstruct ‘the image of the Black female masculinised, undesired body created by the imperialistic gaze (X, 2011)

*Figure 2: Changing Places: Four Women and I.*



Figure 2 is taken from a series of photographs entitled Four Women and I; Lori asserts ‘I have tried to reverse a history of seeing the White woman as spectacle, as the object of the gaze, so I force the Black woman to the central frame. The viewer cannot ignore her’ (p. 56). There is the argument that queer women’s sexuality is marginalised (Richardson, 1993), so the picture can be seen as disrupting narratives on queer women’s sexual lives, this is an argument explored in

Richardson's '*Constructing Lesbian Sexualities*', Richardson asserts 'sexual aspects of being a lesbian that have tended to dominate how others see us (1993:276).' While this research supports Richardson's view that sexual aspects often dominate the way that queer women are seen, I argue that this argument is only valid in relation to mainly White affluent lesbians, as people of colour, of all sexual orientations are already sexualised because of white supremacist perceptions of 'race' (hooks, 1981, Barnard, 2008). Not once does Richardson make any links to European colonialism, in order to understand how this may have shaped a queer woman of colour's sexual self. In this way, Richardson uses a Eurocentric framework to universalise why queer women are so reluctant to discuss sexual matters and it strengthens the notion of lesbianism as White, which, in turn further marginalises queer women of colour.

If we turn our attention to figure 2, the debates around racialization and racism give this particular picture a different interpretation and meaning, one of black women and hypersexualisation which is inexplicitly bound to European Colonisation (hooks, 1981), a perspective that the artist does not discuss. Within the context of European Colonialism, Black women have been and continue to be object of the gaze, for example, Sara Saartjie Baartman also known as Hottentus venus, was used as a sexual display during the 19th century. Saartjie was used to differentiate the innocent White female European body from the

perceived sexualised Black primitive body (Crais and Scully, 2009). In this context, Lori's work can be seen as not only perpetuating racial stereotypes about Black women, but also stereotyping queer White women as only wanting Black women for their perceived hypersexuality.

While slavery is an essential framework to view the ways in which black women are perceived sexually, it should not be the only framework.

Black women in this instant, should not be shamed for seeking erotic pleasure, due to the ways in which their bodies have historically, been pathologised by colonialists (hooks, 1984). In order to move away from a colonial narrative, scholars must examine the ways in which Black women navigate their sexual selves. I would suggest that the focus should be on deconstructing the white imperialistic gaze which polices when and where and how Black women should be represented sexually. What this discussion has highlighted is the difficulties involved with black sexual assertiveness and agency.

### Orientalism

Another legacy of colonialism is Orientalism. Prominent Postcolonial thinker, Said (2003), describes Orientalism as a 'Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient' (p.3). Europeans represented Eastern culture as exotic and backwards.



Representing the East in such a way was not only integral to constructing a European identity, but was also integral to rationalising colonial rule. Orientalism can also be seen as an area of racialized desire as Eastern indigenous populations were perceived and continue to be perceived as exotic and passive. These colonial power relationships are continually perpetuated through sex tourism. The construction of the Orient have made the East popular destination for Western tourists where they are able to act out on their racialized and sexualised fantasies. It is important to note that while racialised desire may motivate some individuals to get involved in inter-racial relationships, not all inter-racial and /or inter-cultural same-sex relationships are affected by issues of racialised desire (Steinbugler, 2012). I argue that racialized desire is bound in White supremacist thought.

### Sexual Racism

Racialised desire and sexual racism can be seen as two sides of the same coin. Sexual racism refers to sexual discrimination based on race, which is usually hidden as a sexual preference (Plummer, 2007). On dating sites such as Grindr, American White gay men regularly use overt racist language such as 'No Blacks' and 'No Asians' and hide under the pretence that it is a dating preference (Plummer, 2007). This is where the true danger lies, as preferences are shaped and reflected by social

structures that follow colonialized beauty standards, where White European features are deemed the most attractive while rendering people of colour as undesirable. In research on sexual racism, the focus is mostly common held on American gay men (Lester and Goggin, 2007, Plummer, 2007; Coleman, 2011). Queer men of colour are often the victims of sexual racism, this view is supported by Plummer (2007) who suggests that sexual racism can reveal hierarchies of racialized power within society. It has been suggested that people of colour are more likely to take sexual risks because of their limited dating options (Coleman, 2011).

### Racism and Mental Health

Extensive research shows the ways in which, racism affects the well-being of those who are not perceived as White (Du Bois, 1994; hooks, 1995). For instance, people who experience racism are more likely to suffer with mental and physical illnesses (hooks, 1995; Drexler, 2007). Individuals can be subjected to racism from an early age, International research conducted by Deakin University and University College London showed that children and young people who were victims of racism suffered with poor mental health issues such as depression and anxiety, 'the review showed 461 cases of links between racism and child and youth health outcomes.'(The Melbourne Newsroom, 2013). This is unsurprising given the misconceptions,

stereotypes and assumptions that are made about people of colour. Moreover, when those from marginalised racial groups seek help from white institutions they are often met with an institutionally racist mental health system.

Figures suggest people of colour, particularly those who self-identify as Black are disproportionately treated in mental health services (Mind, 2011). A report conducted by Mind found Black men were often stereotyped as aggressive and were perceived as a threat which resulted in a higher detainment rate and were more likely to be medicated as a result than those who are perceived as White (Mind 2011). What is more, the term racism was never mentioned in Mind's report, but recommended peer support groups for Black minority ethnic members (2011). While I cannot deny the importance of providing support for people of colour, who use such service, Very little was recommended about how to combat racist attitudes and practices in such institutions this puts full responsibility solely onto the victim. This is an example of institutional racism, which is not limited to mental health institutions; research continuously shows the ways in which racism pervades institutions (Better, 2002; Mills; 1997).

There has to be an acknowledgement that we live in a racist society, for not naming, will allow racism and its manifestations to flourish. What

should be recommended is racism being actively challenged by service providers' from within their own teams.

In light of what has been discussed being part of inter-racial relationship would be difficult. Racism is pervasive in society and can leave individuals conflicted when in such a union, depending on the race and/or ethnicity of the partner. Parker (1999), a prominent Black feminist addresses the complexities of being a Black woman in an inter-racial same sex relationship with a white woman in her poem entitled *My Lover is A Woman*, below is an extract:

*"My lover's eyes are blue  
& when she looks at me  
I float in a warm lake  
Feel my muscles go weak with want  
Feel good  
Feel safe  
Then -I never think of the blue eyes that have glared at me moved three stools way  
from me in a bar"*

Parker seems to understand the connections, Parker recognises that her partner is part of an oppressive group, this may impact the dynamics of power within the relationship. In view of all that has been mentioned so far, I would suggest that colonialism has made inter-racial and/or inter-cultural relationships of all kinds, widely suspect to the outside world.

## Homosexuality and Sexualities

Within a European context, social constructionism has been a prominent approach to theorising sexualities (Richardson, 2000; Rahman, M. and S. Jackson, 2010). From this perspective, sexualities are shaped by the social, political, legal and economic climate (Weeks, Holland and Waites, 2003). During the following section, I argue that colonialism underpins homonegativity in the commonwealth, it is an argument which is rarely examined within academia. Institutionalised Christianity has played a central role in shaping sexual attitudes, particularly in the colonial era. Although, Christianity is not the only religion to be interpreted in homonegative ways (Kugle, 2010).

Dominant narratives around sexuality privilege heterosexuality and not all heterosexual practices are viewed equally, heterosexuality which is based on monogamy and procreation and underpinned by patriarchy is privileged. Feminists have theorised the male bias underpinning heterosexuality (Koedt, 1953; Rich, 1978; hooks, 1984), for instance, sexual acts that are deemed as 'real sex' focus on cisgender male sexual pleasure (Koedt, 1953; Richardson, 1993).

Heterosexuality is not only privileged but also institutionalised. By privileging heterosexuality, other sexual orientations are deemed abnormal. This is evident when examined from an historic perspective. The first British civil anti- sodomy law 'passed in 1533 by Henry VIII' (Bhaskaran, 2013: 17) which was known as the Buggery Act 1533. Anti-sodomy laws were also implemented by European Colonialists to prosecute men who engaged in same-sex sexual practices within the commonwealth. The purpose of the laws were to bring Christian sexual morality to perceived uncivilised native inhabitants. (Lennox and Waite, 2013). Morality was underpinned by Christianity, within this context, sodomy was interpreted as being sinful and 'associated with God's punishment of the people of the city of Sodom (2013:147)' Therefore, British society interpreted sex between men as sinful (Kirby, 2013).

The legacy of colonial laws has had a lasting negative impact, the majority of countries that continue to criminalise same-sex relationships are former British colonies (Hepple, 2012; Lennox and Waite, 2013). Although, homonegativity within the Commonwealth is a nuanced issue as it involved a variety of cultures and countries (Cowell, 2013), it is commonly believed that same-sex desire has been imported from the West. This attitude is evident in an Indian context (Gandhi, 2002) and is also a prevalent attitude in African countries such as Zimbabwe (Human Rights Watch, 2013) .Vanita (2002) traces contemporary Indian homonegative attitudes back to Judo-Christian discourse (p.3).

In 1967, male homosexuality was decriminalised in Britain. There was no legislation in relation to queer women. I would suggest that this lack of legislation undermined sex between women and would agree with Richardson when she contends that 'it rendered sex between women as more invisible, but also more harmless' (1993: 279). The age of consent for queer relationships between men was fixed at 21 while the age of consent for heterosexual relationships was 16, this reflected overt hostile attitudes to such relationships, at the time (Stonewall, 2009).

As discussions on sexuality have shifted, there has been a focus on the concept of homophobia. Although homophobia is commonly used in public debate (Stonewall, 2013; Amnesty International, 2014). There have been criticisms of the term homophobia for the way that it both psychologises and potentially excuses discrimination by its association with mental health (Fish, 2012). Increasingly this is being acknowledged in academic debate (Rye and Meaney, 2009; Langdridge, 2012; Slietmaeckers and Lievens, 2014; Skerven and Aubin, 2015), what is more, homonegativity seems to be a more suited term. Homonegativity refers to negative attitudes towards homosexuality (Slietmaeckers and Lievens, 2014).

Although, the United Kingdom prides itself on being democratic, homonegativity is endemic in society, Stonewall is an LGBT organisation based in London, and its latest report entitled *Stonewall's Homophobic Hate Crime: The Gay British Crime*

*Survey 2013* found:

'one in ten (ten per cent) lesbian, gay and bisexual people who experienced a homophobic hate crime or incident in the last three years were physically assaulted, which equates to two per cent of all lesbian, gay and bisexual people. The figures are higher for black and minority ethnic lesbian, gay and bisexual people with 22 per cent of victims having been physically assaulted, two and a half times the figure for white people (nine per cent) (p. 10).'

The Stonewall study also strongly suggests that the intersection of racism played a crucial role in the homonegativity that queer Black respondents endured and should be researched as such. As hooks asserts:

'to make synonymous experience of homophobic aggression with racial oppression deflects attention away from the particular dual dilemma that non-white gay people face, as individuals who confront both racism and homophobia' (1989: 125).

hooks published her book, 26 years ago in the United States, evidently, the same problems remain in the United Kingdom. If Stonewall's intention is to make life better for all queer people then the organisation needs to take racial oppression as seriously as it takes homonegativity. One of the ways to counteract this would be to undertake research on racism with White mainstream LGBTQ communities and organisations. Racism is rife in white dominated LGBTQ communities (Moraga and Anzaldua, 1983; Moraga, 2000, Plummer, 2007 Steinbugler, 2012). This is evident in the notion that people of colour are significantly



homophobic than the White population. Yet, it is hardly acknowledged by white- dominated organisations. Gay is perceived as White (Puar, 2008), which renders queer people of colour invisible. With this in mind, 'queer people of colour thus challenge both straight Blackness as well as queer Whiteness (Miyake, 2008:135-136)'.

The stigma attached to queer identities means some queer individuals often face family rejection (Anzaldúa, 1987; Stevens, 2012) which can result in substance abuse (Stevens, 2012) and homelessness (Green, 2008; Keuroghlian, Shtasel and Bassuk, 2014). The homonegativity that queer people face is dependent on other intersecting identities, such as 'race', gender, religion and age. For instance, due to the fact that we live in a male-dominated society, relationships between queer women are seen as titillation for heterosexual men (Richardson, 1993). Likewise, homogeneity that queer men may be subjected to may be linked to their masculinity and gender representation (Kimmel, 1994, Connell, 2005).

Although, there has been a shift in law on queer sexualities, for instance, the legalisation of same -sex marriage (Lahey, and Alderson, 2004) homonegativity remains, this can have a negative impact on same-sex relationships, the impact can be worse for inter-racial same-sex couple. Recently, an American inter-racial same -sex couple (a

Black man partnered with a White man) posted a wedding picture on Facebook. Due to the high level of complaints, Facebook deemed the wedding picture offensive, and removed it (McCormick, 2013). This is why queer people often negotiate when and where to be affectionate, including on social media. Such pressures can have a negative impact on same-sex couples, domestic violence is prevalent in same-sex relationships (Butler, 1999; Ristock, 2002).

This research agrees with Wendt and Zannettino's (2014) definition of domestic violence as 'the combination of physical and/or sexual violence... economic, emotional, social (constant monitoring) and spiritual abuse' (p.2). Western feminists were successful in bringing domestic violence to light in the 1970's (Ristock, 2002), however, feminists conceptualised the issue using a heterosexual framework which was underpinned by patriarchal ideology (Wendt and Zannettino, 2014). This placed all women as victims and all men as perpetrators, while I would never downplay the gains from such a movement. This has marginalised experiences of domestic violence in same-sex relationships, as women are not seen to be aggressors (Ristock, 2002). While academic research on domestic violence continues to develop, racial abuse within such relationships is an underexplored phenomenon and will be addressed in this research.

Academic literature on inter-racial and /or inter-cultural same-sex relationships has been limited. One of the most contemporary studies to explore contemporary inter-racial relationships was conducted by Alibhai-Brown and Montague (1992). In their book '*The colour of Love: Mixed Race Relationships*', qualitative methods, such as unstructured interviews were used to enable individuals in mixed race relationships to talk freely about their experiences. However, the book only detailed the experiences of inter-racial heterosexual relationships in Britain.

One of the most recent works on inter-racial same -sex relationships was conducted in America, the book is entitled '*Beyond Loving*' (2012) by Steinbugler. She interviewed 82 couples separately to examine inter-racial lesbian, gay and straight relationships. Her work is useful as it provides critical examination of inter-racial intimacy, but limited by the fact that she only interviews American Black and White inter-racial couples. Steinbugler contends that black and white relationships were explored since the Black/White binary has been the most regulated in the United States.

While I am in agreement with her statement, it is important to move away from simplistic binaries' as White supremacy is more complex as this research will show. Moreover, by focussing on Black/White experience, further marginalises the lived experiences of people from other ethnicities. Furthermore, the participants in Steinbugler's study had

to self-identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual in order to participate. This research is in agreement with scholars who have critiqued the limitations of such sexual categories (Diamond, 2011; Halberstam, 2012).

Moreover, some individuals do not identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual since there are imperialist connotations associated with Western constructions of sexuality. In attempt to address this issue, in this research, all questions relating to social identity are open ended. There is very little research examining inter-cultural relationships of all types.

## Summary

This chapter has examined and discussed issues specific to inter-racial and/or inter-cultural same-sex relationships. Hopefully, this research will help shed light on the issues that individuals face in inter-racial and/or inter-cultural same-sex relationships. It is important to be clear, the complexities in inter-racial and/or inter-cultural same-sex relationships exist because of cultural constraints rather than there being something inherently wrong with inter-racial and/or inter-cultural same-sex relationships.

Racism and homonegativity are both legacies of European Colonialism continue to have devastating consequences for those who do not fit into dominant social 'norms'. Both, racism and homonegativity make inter-racial and/or inter-cultural same-sex couples highly visible which, in turn, results in discrimination. Ultimately, European Colonialism and white supremacy are inexorably linked to homophobia and racism, which continue to negatively impact the well-being of those who are affected by such issues today.

While British organisations like Stonewall and Mind were created to support such individuals, this research has showed how their failure to

examine interconnected social identities continues to marginalise the most vulnerable.

While contemporary academic research sheds light on issues affecting inter-racial and/or inter-cultural same-sex relationships, research continues to be lacking and limited by a Black/White framework; this research has contributed to that challenge.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

This chapter will explain and justify the research methodology deployed for this study. It will detail mixed methods, sampling, questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, analysis of data and then I will conclude.

The purpose of this research study was to analyse the experiences of individuals in interracial and/ or inter-cultural same -sex relationships, in order to answer the following research questions:

- To what extent do racism and homonegativity impact on the relationships of inter-racial and/or inter-cultural same-sex couples?
- To what extent do people from different racial/ethnic groups, ages and social classes experience homonegativity and racism differently?
- Does the length of the relationship result in different experiences of racism and homonegativity?

The methodological approach was driven by the research questions detailed in the previous chapter.

## Research Design

Initially, the research took the shape of a qualitative research study.

According to Holloway and Bailey (2011), 'qualitative inquiry is still the most humanistic and person-centred way of discovering and uncovering thoughts and action of human beings' (p.974). Previous studies exploring inter-racial and/ or inter-cultural relationships also use qualitative methods such as unstructured interviews (see, Alibhai-Brown and Montague, 1992; Steinbugler, 2012). Due to the small scale of this study and limited time scale, a mixed methods approach was taken, which included questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. According to Grix (2004), using mixed methods 'will ensure a more balanced approach' (p.126). Below, the research methods will be discussed in detail.



## Questionnaires

The first stage of research involved using electronic questionnaires. The decision to use questionnaires was again supported by the limited time scale of the study. Questionnaires allow the researcher to get a large amount of data in a short time period (Knight, 2002). This research was concerned with individual experiences of an inter-racial and/or inter-cultural same -sex relationships, using online questionnaires made it possible to target the population quickly and at a low cost. Survey Monkey was used to design the questionnaires, Survey Monkey is an online survey design; it enables researchers to collect data through multiple sources. For this research, the questionnaires were distributed online via Facebook and mailing lists. Using online questionnaires meant participants' were able to complete the questionnaires wherever was convenient and take as much time needed while remaining completely anonymous. This meant that the researcher had no influence on the participant's responses. Using online questionnaires meant only participants with an internet connection were able to

contribute to the study which undeniably had an impact on wealth, social class and region.

Two questionnaires were used in this study, a questionnaire was designed for those currently in an inter-racial and/or inter-cultural same-sex relationship (appendix 1) and one was designed for those who had previously been in such a relationship (appendix 2). This approach was taken as it made the questionnaires easier for the participants' to follow. A disclaimer was put at the beginning of each questionnaire stating that the information provided by the participant would be for research purposes only. This was done to reassure the participant about issues of confidentiality.

The questions were designed to be quick and easy for participants' to follow, open-ended questions were used to allow participants to detail their own experiences. It is important to note, that questions concerning demographical data were also open -ended, as it was felt that current labels to describe sexual orientation and 'ethnicities' were limiting and culturally specific. Ultimately, this allowed the participants to define their own identities. Conversely, I had to condense the identities in order to make sense of the research. In the previous chapter, it was stated that white supremacy was a global system which affected inter-racial and/or inter-cultural same-sex relationships in multiple ways; therefore it was important to gather data from a range of participants.

The use of questionnaires made this possible as responses were taken from a diverse population. Participants were also given the option of not answering any questions with which they were uncomfortable answering. Due to the sensitive nature of the research, support groups were included at the bottom of each questionnaire. Given the anonymous nature of the questionnaires, participants were not able to withdraw their responses. This was explicitly stated on both questionnaires.

Before the questionnaires were distributed contact was made with Trans\* organisations such as Gender Matters in order to ensure that correct terminology was used, when describing trans\* inter-racial and/or intercultural same-sex relationships. Whilst there were a range of opinions, the most agreed upon term was used. The questionnaires were also used to invite participants to take part in a semi- structured one to one interview; 15 participants expressed interest, but because of personal issues some participants had to withdraw. Ultimately, 10 participants were interviewed.

### Semi-structured interviews

The second stage of the research involved semi-structured interviews. This method was ideal in understanding the experiences on a more subjective personal level. It has been recognised by several authors that questionnaires are strengthened when used with other research methods, such as the interview (Grix, 2004; Wisker, 2008; Gabb, 2009); ultimately, this led to a richer analysis. While there are many different types of interviews, such as structured, semi-structures and unstructured, semi structured interviews were deemed most suitable. This was due to the small scale of the study, and the sensitive nature of the topic. Moreover, semi-structured interviews allows for a flexible structure.

Although, indicative questions were used (appendix 3), this flexibility allowed me to ask follow up questions, which were dependent upon and led by the participant's responses. Ultimately, this meant that the interviews were primary focused on the participants experience. Before the interview took place, the information sheet was discussed (appendix 4), consent forms (appendix 5) were signed and issues of confidentiality

and anonymity was explicitly stated. Participant information sheet and the consent form can be found in the appendix.

During the interview, it was crucial to give the participant as much time as necessary to relive their experiences. Some of the respondents felt that they were talking too much, but it was stressed that the interview was about them, and they could discuss as much as they needed. Their experiences were the most vital part of the interview. Using interviews enabled me to ask follow up questions, this would not be possible with the use of questionnaires alone. The interviews were recorded, transcribed through a computer and saved on an encrypted USB stick.

Transcribing the interviews proved useful for a number of reasons; such as reliving the event, helping to familiarise the researcher with data and helped the researcher to identify their own shortcomings as an interviewer, these shortcomings improved in the remaining interviews. The interviews were between 20-35 minutes in duration. To minimise risk, interviews were held in a safe location, the Birmingham LGBT Well-being centre and via Skype. The participants interviewed in the LGBT well-being Centre were offered health and well-being support after the interview. Moreover, the participants were informed that they were free to leave at any time.

Using Skype also minimised risk as participants are able to be anonymous as they want. For instance, participants could choose

whether to disclose their identity by using a picture on their profile, or a video call.

Consent is recognised as an ongoing process and as a result, participants had a month from the interview date to withdraw their responses. The interviewees had a month from the interview date to withdraw their information. This was stated on the information sheet; moreover, participant withdrawal was discussed before any interviews had taken place. There are no statistics that detail how big or small this population is, but for this study, the questionnaires had a combined total of 127 responses, as well as 10 semi- structured interviews. This is a decent basis for beginning to explore such a population. Limited academic research in this area has lower sample sizes, compared to this research.

### Sampling

Sampling is a key component in designing the research methodology; sampling has a significant impact on the quality of the findings. A mixture of snowballing and purposive sampling was used for this study. Knight (2002), refers to this as a multistage sampling. A snowballing sample is needed when dealing with a hard to reach population. This involves asking members from the targeted population for information on other members who might be interested in taking part in the research.

Academic literature has detailed the fact that queer people of colour are often marginalised in research on queer sexualities (Barnard, 2008, Fish, 2012), so a purposive sample was also used to address this problem. This also correlated with the purpose of the study.

Both strategies were deemed appropriate as those who are currently in, or who have previously been in, an inter-racial and/or inter-cultural same-sex relationship are a hard to reach population. The snowballing sample was used to make contact with friends and colleagues who were able to put me in touch with potential participants and the purposive sample involved selecting potential participants who met the criteria for this research. So individuals who have/had been in an inter-racial and/or inter-cultural same-sex relationships. With this in mind, the two sampling methods supplemented each other, employing these methods enabled me to get a large number of participant in a short amount of time and was also the most cost effective.

### Access and Ethics

This study was guided by the ethical principles set out by the University of Birmingham's Ethical Committee. This was explicitly stressed before participants were recruited. Participants were recruited via email contact with spokespeople from a range of LGBT organisations, including Birmingham LGBT. Birmingham LGBT aims to raise awareness and support LGBTQ self-identified individuals in Birmingham. The Birmingham LGBTQ Centre was aimed because it was local. The Spokespeople from Birmingham LGBT were able to put me in touch with other members of their communities. As there was a lower age limit, youth groups were excluded from the research. Moreover, participants were recruited through Facebook and mailing lists. Organisations such as: the University of Birmingham's LGBT Society, SAFRA Project (provides support for LGBT Muslim women.), Imaan (LGBTQ Muslim support) LGBT Employees Network, Black Pride, People in



Harmony (inter-racial anti-racist organisation) and Rainbow Noir (provides support for LGBTQ minority ethnic individuals) were also used. These organisations amongst many were chosen because such organisations gave access to members of the research population. In this research, the majority of participants were defined as people of colour, this enabled me to analyse lived experiences which are often erased.

Recruiting participants in this way proved to be a success as the questionnaires got a variety of responses from broad range of individuals from a variety of backgrounds, which will allow the study to examine patterns on how white supremacy and the legacy of European Colonialism has affected inter-racial and/or inter-cultural same- sex relationships.

The aim was to recruit 100 participants from queer groups to complete both online electronic questionnaires. As the purpose of the study is to detail inter-racial and/or inter-cultural same sex relationships, the participants were from a range of genders, ages, races and ethnic groups. There was also a lower age limit of 18, this was explicitly stated on the participant advertisement poster and the questionnaires. This research acknowledges the rigid and Eurocentric limitations of labels such as lesbian, gay and bisexual and so, respondents did not have to

self- identify as such, but rather have had the experience of being in an inter-racial and/or inter-cultural same-sex relationship.

The research questions broadly focus on lived experiences of racism and homonegativity; this determined which participants took part in the interviews. While the interviewees were diverse, a known limitation was that they were from Western parts of the world such as United Kingdom and the United States. The intent was to interview 12 participants, who are in or have previously been in an inter-racial and/or inter-cultural same-sex relationship. Although it would have been interesting to interview couples, ethically it was a decision the researcher did not take, because of the ethical complications. For example, couples may confront their conflicts during interviews. Ten interviews were conducted in total. As this was a global study, the interviews may have had a higher response rate, if Skype was explicitly stated at the end of the questionnaire. It has also been acknowledged that advertising the interviews separately as well as through the questionnaires may have helped reduce this limitation.

## Fieldwork

There was constant engagement between the researcher and potential participants, through social media and events in the local community. This helped build rapport before any research began. According to Tuhiwai-Smith (1999), 'most research methodologies assume that the researcher is an outsider able to observe without being implicated in the scene (137)'. Previous studies in this area, which were detailed in the literature review were also conducted by women of different 'races' and sexual orientations who were part of an inter-racial and/or intercultural relationships (see, for example Alibhai-Brown, 1993; Steinbugler, 2012).

Scholars such as Edwards (2002), Bennett (2003), Sprague (2005) have argued that having 'insider' knowledge leads to richer data and that was the case for this research. I would also add that using social media also led to richer data. It is important to go beyond the insider/ outsider debate as conducting this research has shown that there is a lot more fluidity to that binary. Within this research, I could be considered an insider, as I self-identify as queer and 'mixed race' therefore, all 'romantic' relationships could be considered inter-racial and/ or intercultural. Moreover, I felt that some of the participants were more

comfortable in discussing their experiences because of my social position. However, this research sees the insider/outsider debate as more nuanced, yes there were commonalities but the way in which we live out those commonalities could differ greatly.

This study generated discussion via Facebook, during the recruitment process. Most members saw the study as an important and under researched research topic and the study was shared by a number of respondents. A few potential participants thought the use of the term same-sex to describe the relationships was problematic, considering people of Trans identity were included. While the limitation had been taken into account, same sex is a common term that many people are familiar with.

On another occasion, a member from a particular Facebook group declared that she had to move from London due to the racist abuse that she has suffered whilst living in London. She felt that White lesbians were not interested in her due to her being a person of colour. This prompted her to move to Berlin, Germany. The most interesting part of the discussion is the ways in which other members trivialised her experiences. The above examples highlight not only the difficulties that can arise, but also the importance of developing a methodology that was sensitive. Furthermore, this reaffirmed the importance of the study.

## Analysis of Data

The demographical data collected through the questionnaires were analysed using descriptive statistics. The descriptive data enabled me to summarise a large amount of quantitative data into graphs and tables, making it easier to make meaningful patterns about the demographic.

The data collected from the interviews and questionnaires was thematically analysed. Thematic analysis is one of the most common approach in qualitative data (Braun and Clarke, 2013). As this research was concerned with social identity, analysing the data thematically allowed the researcher to make important connections to the ways in which social constructions shape reality (Guest, MacQueen and Namey, 2012).

Throughout this study, it has been demonstrated that social constructions negatively impact those who do not conform to dominant social norms. In this research, that applies to individuals who have been in or who are currently in inter-racial and/or inter-cultural same-sex relationships. Thematic analysis is concerned with finding themes and patterns within the data, therefore can be seen as the most useful for capturing the complexities of the experiences of individuals in inter-racial and/or inter-cultural same-sex relationships. The Questionnaires were analysed first and then the interviews. I examined a combination of the same themes and different themes within the two sets of data. Initially, I

used pre-set themes which I identified using my own lived experience and also what was relevant to the literature review. However, new themes re-occurred in the respondents' questionnaires and interviews that I had not anticipated, but needed to be examined.

## Summary

This chapter has explained and justified the research methods used for this study, including the limitations and ethical considerations. It has been argued that semi-structured interviews and questionnaires were deemed most appropriate for this small scale study as they centre on the experiences of participants which were vital to this thesis. The following chapter will provide a discussion of the finding.

#### **Chapter 4: Participants and Demographics.**

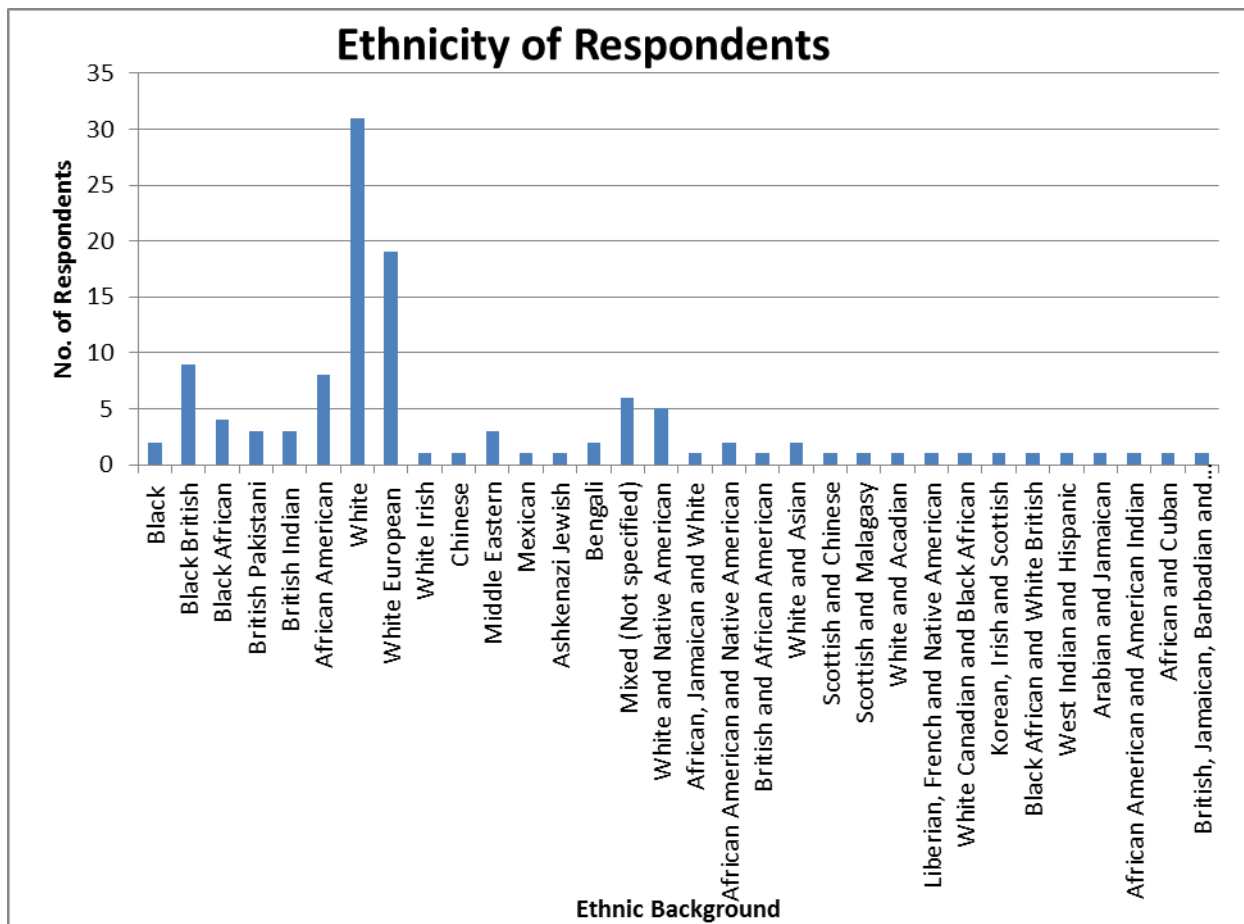
The findings have been thematically analysed in line with the research questions, which were as follows:

- To what extent do racism and homonegativity impact on the relationships of inter-racial and/or inter-cultural same-sex couples?
- To what extent do people from different racial/ethnic groups, ages and social classes experience homonegativity and racism differently?
- Does the length of the relationship result in different experiences of racism and homonegativity?

A total of 127 participants took part in the study; 117 of participants completed in the online- questionnaires and 10 participants took part in the semi-structured one on one interviews. There was a vast breadth of experience that has been captured in this study. The order of the results was informed by the methodological approach. This chapter will begin by detailing the characteristics of participants obtained by the online questionnaires and then will detail the social characteristics of the interviewees.



Figure 3: Ethnicity of the Respondents to the Questionnaires.



In this study, people of colour were the largest group totalling 53.8% of which 24.8% identified as having a mixed ethnic background. White respondents made up 43.6 % of the total respondent population. Only one respondent skipped the question and another respondent deemed the question as irrelevant:

“Irrelevant - don't believe in ethnic categories” Mauritian, Male, gay 31

It is important to note that the respondent in question answered all other aspects relating to social identity.

When discussing mixed ethnicity there is a tendency to discuss dual heritage; for a majority of the mixed participants, mixed ethnicity was much more complex as this research as shown (Ch.2 p6) and figure 3 illustrates. The complexities of mixed ethnicity became important not only in relation to experiences of racism but also showed how racial boundaries within inter-racial and/ or inter-cultural relationships become blurred; which will be discussed later in the chapter.

*Figure 4: Age range of Respondents.*

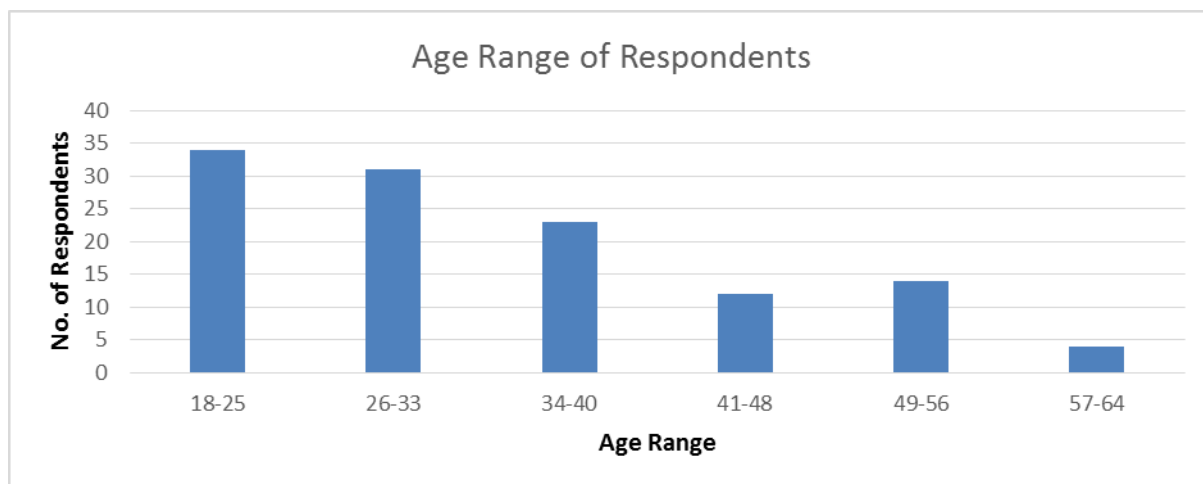
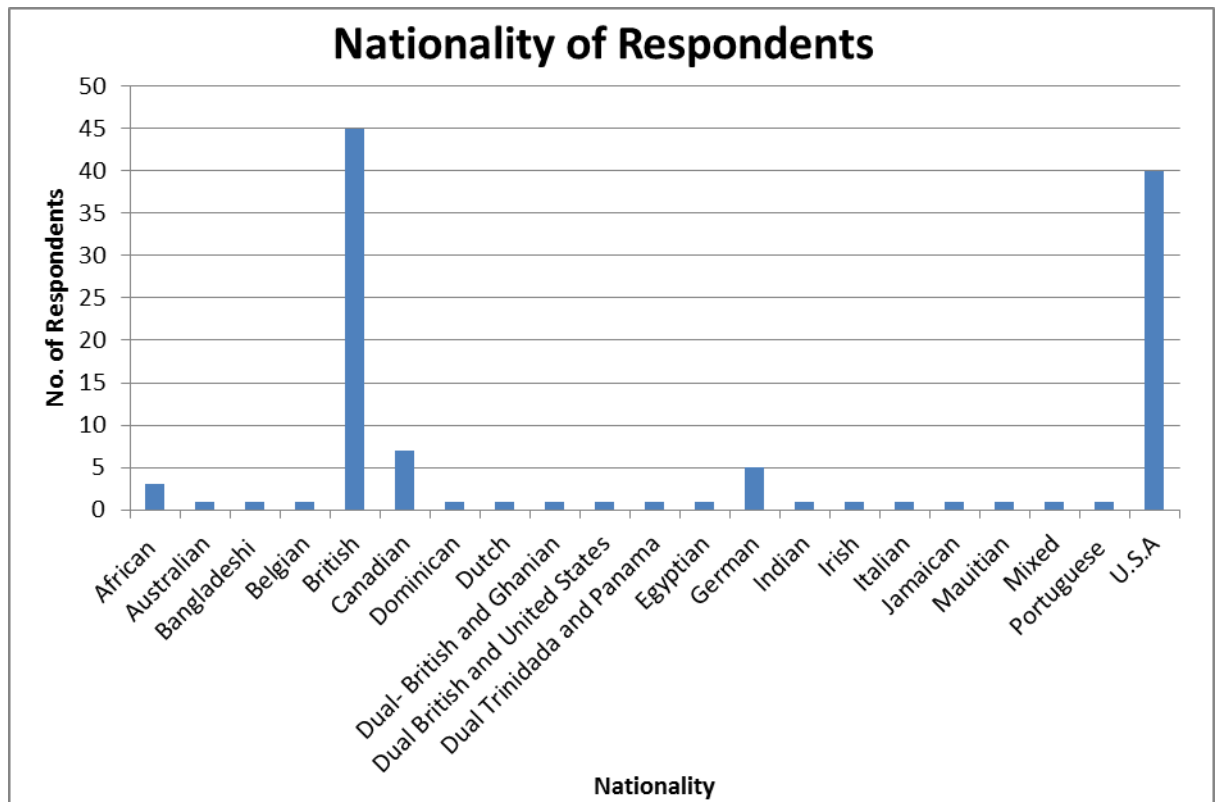


Figure 4 illustrates the age of the respondents. The largest group of respondents were between the ages of 18 and 25.

Figure 5: Nationality of Respondents.



The responses gathered from both the interviews and questionnaires emerged from a variety of countries. Respondents expressed their nationalities in different ways which is captured in figure 5. The table shows both the questionnaire and interview participants. This is significant as it contributes to new insights in understanding experiences of racism and homonegativity globally. It is important to note that my study was dominated by US and UK based citizens, this could be for a number of reasons, including how the questionnaire was disseminated, but also because of the language used.

Figure 6: Sex of Respondents.

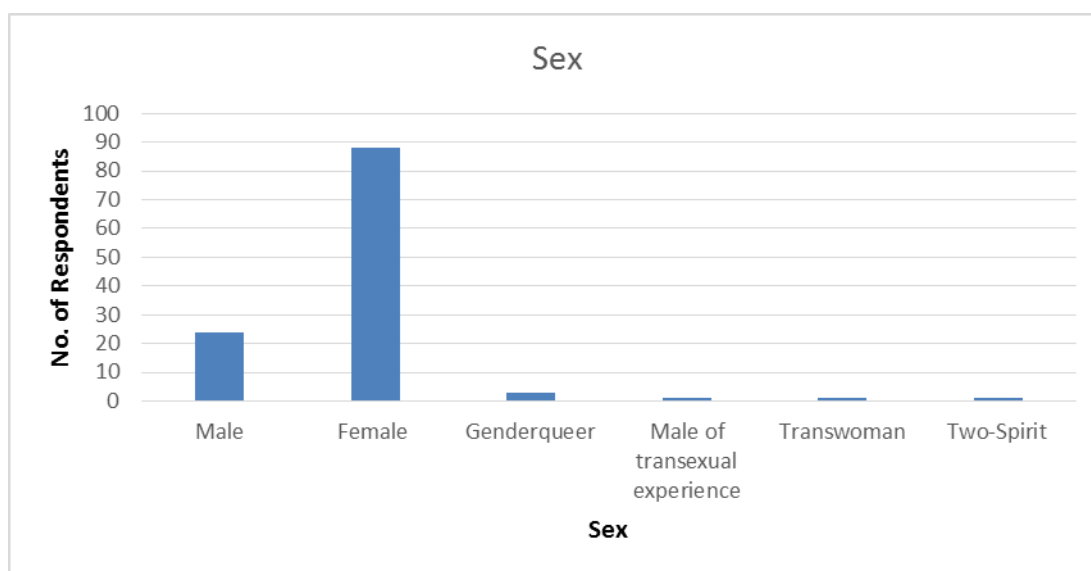
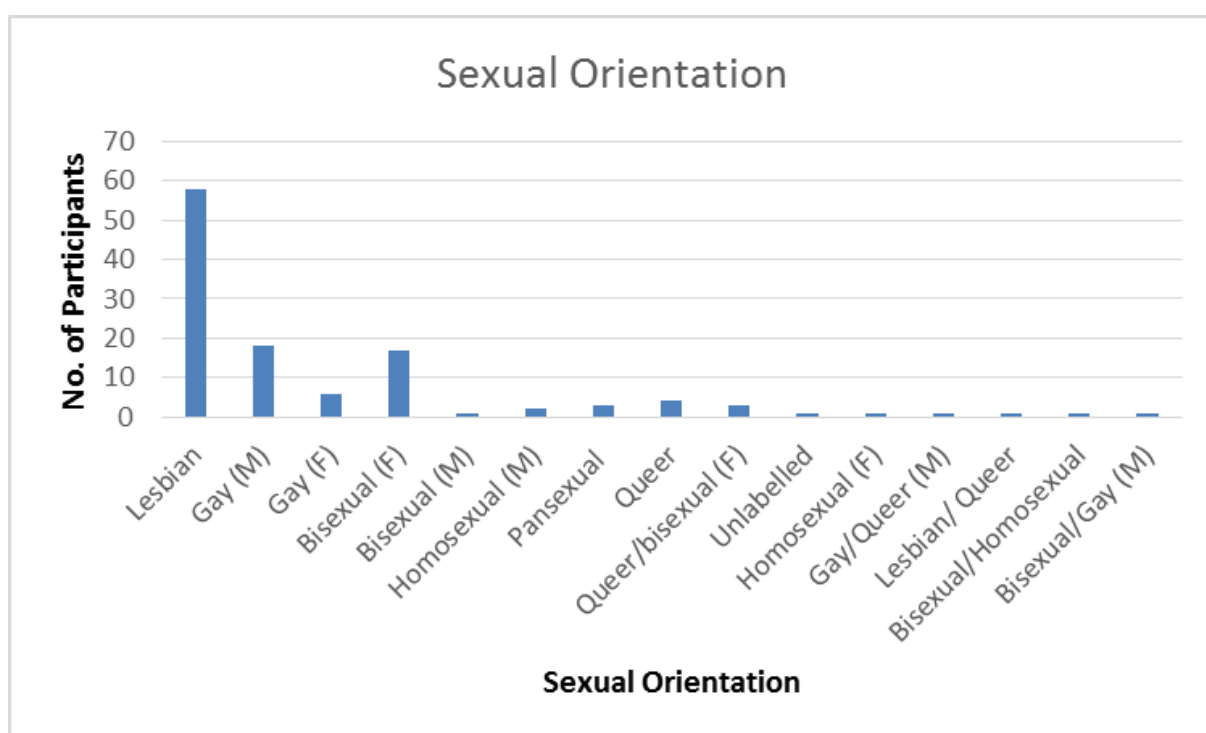


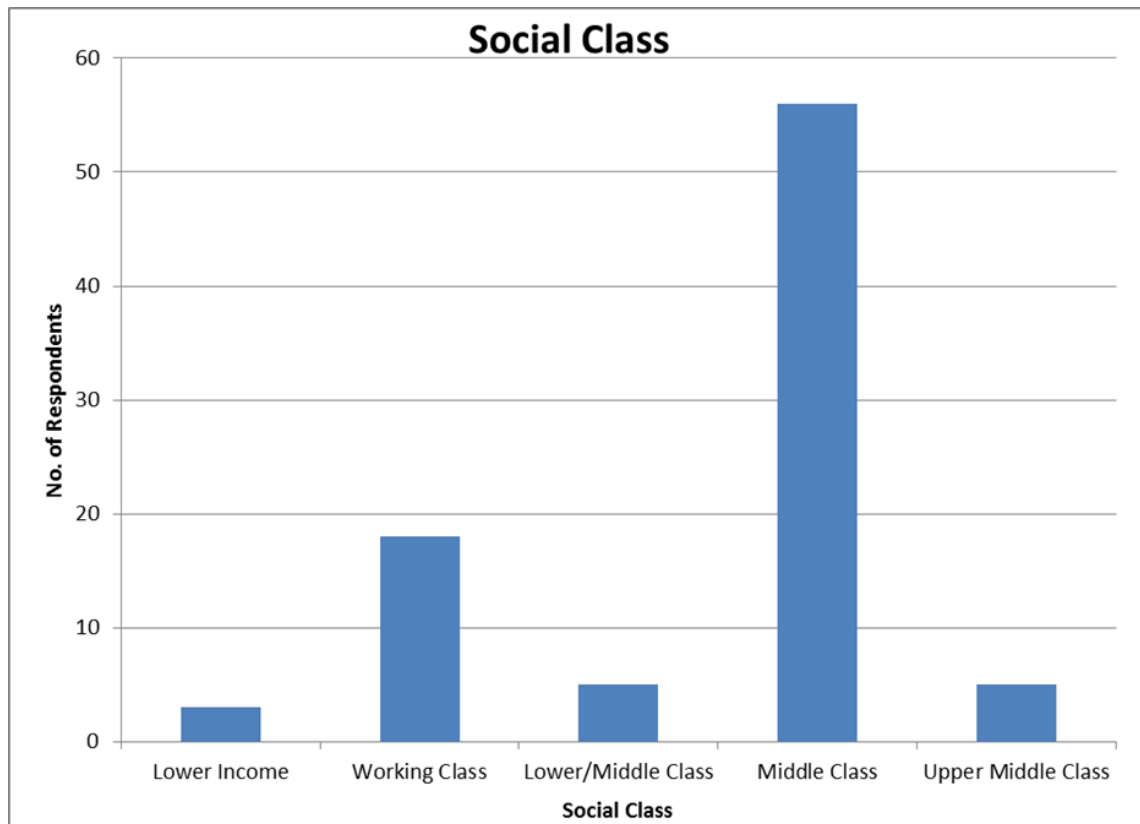
Figure 6 displays the sex of the respondents. I have been able to capture different experiences from those who do not self- identify or fit into rigid male or female categories. There was a clear gender imbalance; 74.58% of participants self-identified as female. Research suggests that women are more likely to use social media, particularly Facebook (Emerson, 2011). I used Facebook as a way to recruit participants, so it becomes inevitable that women were a majority in my research.

Figure 7: Sexual Orientation of Respondents.



The largest group of participants self-identified as lesbian. The abbreviation M stands for male, and F stands for female. Men were more likely to define themselves as gay, whilst women were more likely to self – identify as bisexual. This statistic is consistent with other research, (please see: Office for National Statistics, 2011; Chalabi, 2013, D’Augelli and Patterson, 2013).

*Figure 8: Social Class of Respondents.*



The largest group of respondent's self- identified as middle class 47.5%. 15.3% self- identified as working class. Over a quarter of participants, 26.3% skipped the question or were unsure how to identify; this was expected as it was a global study and social class is defined differently in different national contexts. Ultimately, this limited the class analysis within the study.

### Section 1b

The interviewees will be introduced in this next section. At the beginning of the interview each participant was asked about their social identities and also the social identities of their partners. The questions about social identity were purposely open ended in order allow participants to define themselves. The names used in Figure 7 are pseudonyms; pseudonyms were used in order to conceal the participants' identities. The pseudonyms will be used throughout this chapter.



*Table 1: Social Identities of the respondents as defined in the interviews.*

Name	Sex	Age	Ethnicity	Sexual Orientation
Susan	F	34	White Canadian	Lesbian
Alex	F	20	White/Indian	Bisexual
Stephanie	F	24	African Caribbean	Unlabelled
Michael	M	42	Jamaican/Black	Gay
Baldwin	M	32	Jamaican /Black	Gay
Georgia	F	28	Romany Gypsy	Gay
June	F	39	Jamaican / Black	Lesbian
Alesha	F	18	British Pakistani	Unlabelled
Annalisa	F	32	Puerto Rican/African American	Unlabelled
Rico	M	26	Black British	Gay (at the moment)

A total of 10 interviews were conducted. Out of the total respondents, 70% self-identified as female and 30% identified as male. A range of ethnicities were captured; 4 respondents identified as African Caribbean, 2 respondents identified as Black Jamaicans, 2 respondents identified as 'mixed race', one identified as a British Pakistani, one identified as a White Canadian and another interviewee identified as a Romany Gypsy, but did not identify with a racial category, her reasoning is detailed below:

"I don't identify as white, all my life I've been told you know that oh you're a dirty gypsy this that and the other. So, for me, I don't relate to those people of white ethnicity."

This quote can be seen as problematizing current narratives in dominant culture on issues of race. As academic research has shown, 'race' exhibits much more complexity than we are often led to believe (Ignatiev, 1995; Brodwin, 1999; Alibhai-Brown, 2001; Gulielmo and Salerno, 2003; Oifekwunigwe, 2004; Roediger, 2006). Similarly, this is comparable to heterosexuals who also self-identify as queer as a way to disrupt rigid notions of heteronormativity (Thomas, 1999; Fantina, 2006; Springer, 2008). As Hollibaugh asserts, 'there is heterosexuality outside of heterosexism' (2001: 63), Likewise there may be a Whiteness that is not aligned with racial supremacy.

*Table 2: Detail of the Relationships.*

Name	Current/Previous Relationship	Partner's Details	Length of Relationship
Susan	Current	South Asian, Queer, 32	2 yrs and 10 mths
Alex	Current	White and Barbadian Bisexual, 21	2 yrs.
Stephanie	Previous	Black St. Lucia, Lesbian stud (dominant butch lesbian), 28	3 mths
Michael	Previous	White, Irish, Gay 40's	2 yrs
Baldwin	Previous and Current	White, Gay, 27 (previous) White/black, gay, (current)	2 yrs with previous partner 2-3 mths with current partner
Georgia	Current	British Jamaican, Gay, 40	6 yrs
June	Current	White British, Gay, 52	6yrs on/off
Alesha	previous	African Caribbean, Straight, 18yrs	3 yrs
Annalisa	Previous	White, Gay, 27 yrs	6 yrs
Rico	Current	White, Gay, 23yrs	1 ½ yrs

Table 2 details aspects of the inter-racial and inter-cultural same-sex relationships. Out of the 10 interviews; 4 interviewees described current relationships, 4 interviewees described a previous relationship, one interviewee described both a current and previous relationship and the last interviewee discussed an on/off relationship. The length of relationships ranged from 3 months to 6 years. The most common partnership consisted of a white and black partner in a monogamous long-term relationship. In this study, a year or more is considered a long-term relationship.

In order to answer the research questions, there will be two overarching themes; Racism and Homonegativity, followed by a number of subthemes; racism within a sexual context, racism by association, racism and LGBTQ community homonegativity, homonegativity faced by queer women, homonegativity faced by queer men and familial homonegativity. The two central themes were pre-set, but of the sub-themes were identified during the analysis of the data both questionnaires and interviews will be discussed but as separate data under the same theme.

## **Chapter 5: Racism.**

During this chapter, a number of different types of racism will be discussed; this will include white supremacy, racism by association, Whiteness, inter-cultural same-sex relationships, racism within a sexual context, domestic violence and racism within the White-dominated LGBTQ community. These types of racism were identified as significant in the lives of those in inter-racial and/ or inter-cultural same-sex relationships; this became apparent in both the semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. Moreover, the racism chapter is significantly bigger than the homonegativity chapter and this is due to the fact that the participants were more detailed in their responses.

### **White Supremacy**

Earlier in the literature review, I discussed white supremacy (see Ch. 2 p.8). White supremacy is a global system and is deeply rooted in culture, its power lies in the fact that it has been able to remain largely invisible (Mills, 1997). European Colonialism has a much more complex history, in this research the central issues that will be addressed are racism and homonegativity.

I don't really see people's colours and I try to be with someone that doesn't really see people's colours either kind of thing coz I think if it's love its love kind of thing of it's a feeling it's a feeling (Baldwin, Interview).

Earlier in the dissertation a colour-blind ideology was discussed (see Ch. 2 p.11). However, this positioning fails to explain why some people of colour, such as Baldwin also adopt this ideological position. However, Baldwin contradicts this statement many times during the interview. In the Western sphere, inter-racial and/ or inter-cultural relationships are represented in popular culture as being evidence of a post-racial society (ibid). Though, previous research (Steinbugler, 2012) and this research will prove this is not the case.

Racism can be also experienced as part of inter-racial and/or inter-cultural relationships, whether couples in inter-racial same-sex relationships explicitly acknowledge that or not. In this study, queer people of colour were very detailed in describing their experiences of racism. Overall 61.9% of respondents from the questionnaires and 90% of interviewees reported experiencing racism on a daily basis. It became apparent within the responses from both questionnaires and interviews that many respondents had different perceptions of racism and how racism manifests itself. However, many queer people of colour highlighted the difficulties of identify racism as racism has become normative. What became most apparent in this study was the extent to which racism negatively affected the respondents' lives. When asked whether they have experienced racism, a respondent from the questionnaire stated:

I am black, these things happen on a daily basis from going into stores and the security following me around, to not being able to find certain food types in the shops this is England and although seems like they want the best for everyone, they are liars and thieves to their core- (Canadian, African Caribbean, gay, working class, 33)

The quote clearly demonstrates that he has an understanding of the impact that racism has had on his life due to his Black skin. This quote supports scholars such as Anthias and Yuval –Davis (1992), who have extensively discussed the issue of nationalism as racialized. This becomes evident when the participant in question equates Englishness with Whiteness. The participant's account supports academic research that continues to highlight the construction of Blackness as criminal (Alexander, 2010; hooks, 1995; Muhammod, 2010). Not only does the participant discuss racism on an individual level but also institutionalised racism, being racially profiled by security is an example of institutionalised racism.

There is an underlying justified anger to his response, According to Anzaldua 'the white dominant culture is killing us slowly with its ignorance....Ignorance splits people, creates prejudices (1987: 86)' I am in agreement with Anzaldua and would suggest that this has been the respondent's experience. Ultimately, this is about the dehumanization of black life and the unquestioned norm of the threat that Black people supposedly pose under White supremacy.

I would also suggest that the negative treatment that the participant has received has led him to have a different understanding of Whiteness, one which has generated distrust. For instance, the respondent makes a generalisation about an unspecified 'they'. His conclusion was based on his lived experiences of surviving in a White supremacist society. This also coincides with hooks, who asserts, 'black folks have from slavery on, shared in conversations with one another "special" knowledge of whiteness gleaned from close scrutiny of white people (1996:31).' This "special" knowledge associates whiteness with terror and mistrust.

The effects of institutional racism for other participants of colour meant loss of employment, as Baldwin an interviewee asserts:

Err erm my manager or the owner of the club that I worked at kind of thing she was racist and when I got promoted to assistant manager she didn't like it. So she tried everything in her in in in her you know in her box to actually get me to quit, but I wouldn't quit kind of thing. Then she started making false accusations that I was robbing from the till, I was robbing drinks. I asked her to prove it. She can't prove it. Erm so I actually ended up getting sacked anyway because she just didn't like me- (Baldwin, Interviewee).

This situation has had a damaging effect on Baldwin, 'she really actually destroyed a big chunk of my life kind of thing'- Baldwin. He was also disowned by family because of his sexual orientation, the homonegativity added to the isolation. Baldwin's job was his only source of income, he had no savings which meant he had to move out of his shared accommodation. The only option that Baldwin had was to stay at a hostel. Although, this is one story, this particular example illustrates the way intersections in experience might be understood. White



respondents from questionnaires who felt as though they had experienced direct racial discrimination were more likely to give examples of individual experiences of racism. For instance, “I was told that I was a Nazi” (American, White, Lesbian, 50). The participant was referred to as a Nazi, due to her German heritage. A White Irish participant detailed the time that she was spat on:

“I have been spat on by two girls on the bus because I was white, they said some awful things, but that was just once, so I'm lucky. My partner gets treated differently a lot of the time. It's disgusting. I also had an incidence where I was on the bus stopped at traffic lights, and a van pulled up alongside and a guy lent over and banged on the window and shouted “top of the mornin to ya”. I was wearing a green top and my hair is ginger” (United Kingdom, Irish, Lesbian, 26).

Although the respondent had experienced prejudice, she is aware of the relative privilege that whiteness affords her which may suggest why she feels lucky. She also may feel lucky in relation to her Black Zimbabwean partner, who faces discrimination on a daily basis, something which the participant acknowledges. The participant self-identifies as ethnically Irish, the fact that she has experienced racism further supports a notion of the Irish as an oppressed group (Ignatiev, 1995).

### Racism by Association

A pattern emerged during the questionnaires; White partners in longer term inter-racial same-sex relationships discussed issues of racism by association. A White British lesbian discusses her partner's family's reaction; 'her family struggle with why a white British woman would make an acceptable partner. Combination of homophobia and racial prejudice' (British, White, lesbian, 51). The respondent is speaking about how she as a white British woman was perceived by her partner's family.

Participants of colour also discussed the indirect racism that white partners were subjected to, 'many people on nights out they would say to my partner "here comes the paki shagger" (British, Indian, gay, 24). In a White supremacist society, it is encouraged to stick to one's own racial group. The comment in question is evident of the type of the repercussions of straying from the 'norms'. From the respondents quote such relationships are still stigmatised, even in marginalised LGBT communities. On other occasions, queer people of colour in inter-racial same sex relationships were often seen as traitors:

'Walking with my wife through a club with predominantly black people, a black woman roughly pulled me aside and asked very aggressively why I was letting the side down, I

asked what she meant and she replied "what are you doing going out with a white bitch, they've taken everything from us why should we give them our women too". I politely asked her to leave me alone which she did, kissing her teeth and called me a traitor ('mixed race', lesbian, 34).

The participant in question is a 'mixed race' woman in a relationship with a White English woman. The Black woman in the quote makes references to European Colonialism. The quote helps to recognise not only how colonialism has informed thinking around race, but also how some inter-racial and/or inter-cultural relationships are viewed. For instance, the participant's White partner is perceived as a thief. Moreover, the quote illustrates the challenges posed to individuals who self-identify as 'mixed race', in the above quote the woman has informed the participant of her own racial identity, this is demonstrated by the fact that she has already informed the participant of what racial side that she should take.

The mixed race participant was described as a traitor. This is not unusual as mixed race individuals are often deemed as traitors regardless of who they choose to date (Phoenix and Tizard, 2002; Root, 1996). These findings confirm need for legislation within England, such as the Equality Act (2010) that protects those who suffer discrimination by association.

## Whiteness

In Western society, whiteness is perceived as the norm, but in inter-racial and/or inter-cultural same-sex relationships, many White respondents within the questionnaires reported experiencing prejudice, something which is specific to inter-racial relationships, as the quotes demonstrate, 'Initially, I was the "terrible White girl" who made her move away. Her family has gone out their way to make me feel uncomfortable on a few occasions' (British, Irish lesbian 39).

The next participant discusses the differences of her experiences in a monoracial same-sex relationship and an inter-racial same-sex relationship, 'when I had a white girlfriend I thought less about whether we would be accepted or fit in - I assumed we would. Now I'm just that bit more hesitant (British, White, Lesbian 38). An aspect of White privilege includes not having to think about how others will perceive you (McIntosh, 1988), but this is crucial in the context of positive social change, the participants account confirms the earlier hypothesis (see Ch. 2 p.13), where it was suggested that White privilege would mean White people experience a lot less racism outside of inter-racial relationships.

Many White respondents in inter-racial same-sex relationships picked up on racist behaviours, as these statements demonstrate, “my partner gets asked for more than 1 id in bar. More scrutiny for a Black person” (Italian, white, male, gay, 53), the respondent in question, seems to have relative understandings of the privileges that whiteness affords them, for instance, he has identified that his partner is more scrutinised in bars.

Some mixed race participants in the study were also perceived as White and this affected the ways that they were treated, this was the case for Alex, an interviewee who self- identifies as ‘mixed race’ (White and Asian) but who is perceived as White:

“Erm I’ve only experienced racism since I’ve been with her. I’ve only experienced racism erm again like basically racism for being white, like perceived as white because there was a guy having a conversation with my girlfriend and erm he was black and I tried to have some input in the conversation and then he was just like “oh, shut up, you white bitch” or something, so like I think kind of that’s the kind of thing I’ve had since I’ve been with her” (Alex, Interview)

It becomes clear from the quote above that Alex also defines racism as overt instances (hooks, 1984). Alex’s partner also identifies as ‘mixed race’, nevertheless, she has different ancestry (White English and Black Barbadian) which has determined how she is treated in a society informed by White supremacy.

In this study, people of colour were disproportionately affected by racism (p.67). The semi-structured interviews enabled me to ask follow up

questions and so I asked Susan, a White interviewee, whether she was impacted by the racism that her partner suffered and Susan replied:

Oh absolutely like I think it is a space where we're divided where erm not necessarily divided but it's hard for me to always know the role to take other than to listen and to be outraged, angered erm and certainly I think with the house thing erm I probably didn't see it as an issue of racism and was kind of like I don't really think that's what it is and then I did step back and be like wo what the fuck do I know? Erm (laughs) what do I know what racism feels like? So erm definitely those moments there's been erm constant erm you moments and again yeah like earlier in our relationship like I really put my foot in my mouth a lot of times and there was a really steep learning curve of having to take some personal time out to be like ok like what's my role as a white person and racism (Susan, Interview).

It became apparent that this is new territory for Susan; moreover, there are very little social scripts that inform White partners on how to support partners of colour, who disproportionately experience racism. In this way, Susan has begun to understand white privilege, I would suggest that the differential experience of her partner has led her to do so. Although, there is a growing body of literature around inter-racial same-sex relationships (Steinbugler, 2012 ), there is very limited research on the role that white partners should take in relation to supporting their partner's through issues of racism.

Perhaps this is what Anzaldua meant when she asserted 'the Borderlands are physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle, and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy' (1987: Preface).

### Inter-cultural Same-sex Relationships

A smaller group of respondents were defined as part of an inter-cultural same-sex relationship. In other words, where partners in a relationship are broadly perceived as being from the same racial group but are from different cultural backgrounds. It is important to note that the following section is shorter because less people participated who were in inter-cultural same-sex relationships. Moreover, those that did, only participated in the questionnaires, so there was less in-depth data.

For white respondents in inter-cultural relationships, there was an acknowledgement that being White meant that racism was not an issue. This is also where the problem lies, as racism is seen as an issue that only affects people of colour. White privilege is central to why racism was not a concern for White participants in inter-cultural relationships, as Whiteness is perceived as the norm, which situates inter-racial relationships as 'abnormal'. Ultimately, it exposes a system of racial power. Other factors will also affect white privilege such as sexual orientation. Being part of a same-sex couple is seen as inferior to heterosexual unions (see, Ch. 2 p.27). Therefore, White people in such relationships will still be subjected to homonegativity. Participants from Black-dominated societies did not view overt racism as a significant issue and explicitly described homonegativity as their primary prejudice

in the study which can be traced back to homonegativity and the commonwealth (see, Ch.2 p.27).

For other respondents of colour, racism was an oppression that some couples faced together, Alesha is a British Pakistani who was partnered with a British African Caribbean woman. When asked about her experience of being part of an inter-cultural same-sex relationship, Alesha stated, 'for me, erm luckily it doesn't make a huge difference because she was from an Afro- Caribbean background and I was from a Pakistani background we both had very strict traditions' (Alesha, Interview). Racism was something that they experienced together:

'We were out one time and erm these white guys came past us and just dissed us as we were together, because we weren't really holding hands just basically dissed us because of the colouring and called her the N word' (Alesha, Interview)

The couple were not 'out' and therefore Alesha believes that homonegativity was not an issue in this incident. Both, Alesha and her partner had been subjected to racial abuse from White individuals. However, the racism that they were subjected to differed. Although, Alesha does not specify the verbal abuse she was subjected to. Her partner was called a racial epithet which serves primarily to perpetuate so-called Black inferiority. It became apparent during the interview that racism was an issue that brought them closer together. The closeness became apparent when Alesha discussed how both partners failed to seek help from White- dominated queer services as they felt the White- dominated queer community would not understand their specific cultural needs which is explicitly linked to Islamophobia within queer



communities (see Ch.2 p.10). Although, they are different racially and ethnically, they draw on similarities in their experiences of same-sex attractions with a fairly conservative cultural religious background. So I would suggest that they are deriving their sameness from that experience, rather than from all the differences that there might be in relation to Pakistani and African- Caribbean cultures. The relationship lasted for 3 years, there were difficulties sustaining the relationship due to culture in relation to homonegativity.

Although, some inter-cultural same-sex Black couples in this study, viewed racism as an issue that could be faced together, for other couples, colourism and discrimination in many communities caused friction in such relationships as this questionnaire respondent found:

I was subjected to racism from the black community when I went to visit her in New Orleans. I would overhear conversations in ebonics about my skinny hips and pejorative comments about being Trans (I do not identify as Trans myself). It was invasive and felt hostile (received prejudice from Black community) (British Pakistani, lesbian, 38).

The quote demonstrates that racial prejudice can be an issue in inter-cultural same-sex relationships, though this area of research is underdeveloped. Although, there were differences in terms of the racial identities and their experiences particularly in terms of racism, both groups have to deal with homonegativity.

### Racism within a Sexual Context

The next section will examine racism within a sexual context. As stated earlier, racism is pervasive in all areas of social life and this includes the sexual arena. This section will begin with racial assumptions, racialised desire and then sexual racism.

### Racial Assumptions

In this research, 'race' based assumptions were also manifested through casual remarks made by family members and friends. There are many assumptions as to why people date inter-racially and/or inter-culturally, racist assumptions are underpinned by ethnosexual stereotypes which date back to European Colonialism (see, Ch. 2 p.20). As the next questionnaire respondent illustrates, 'people from the LGBTQ community think I only date Black guys for the size of their penis (American White, gay, 38). Given the historical context which has been explored, it is expected that some queer people of colour might become very sceptical about White partners:

I wouldn't characterize it as racism, but as misperceptions about why I might be with either of my former partners. Preconceived stereotypes might have come into the minds of their families because each had been in inter-racial relationships before where white guys had been less respectful than myself' (Canadian, White, gay, 38)

In the case above, the participant does not perceive the incident as racism but misconceptions. Furthermore, within the context of a White supremacist society, where white Eurocentric features are considered most desirable, dating a person of colour could also be perceived as a “trade down”, as this next questionnaire respondent demonstrates, ‘friends questioned why a White person would want to go out with a Black person’(White British, lesbian, 20). The participant is currently in a relationship with a mixed race woman.

Some of the interviewees shared similar experiences. When asked whether assumptions were made about the relationship, Georgia responded, “erm yes I guess so that erm my partner would be the butch or dominant one” (Georgia, Interview). Georgia’s partner self- identifies as a Black woman. However, it would be simplistic to regard the perception of Georgia’s partner as purely racial as other factors were at hand. Georgia’s partner is considerably taller and nearly 11 years older than Georgia. These assumptions were dependent on the social identities of the partner, such as age. Annalisa describes the assumptions her friends made about her White partner:

I assumed that erm (sighs) I don’t know how to explain it, I yes there were assumptions that erm like okay first of all that she is white, so erm coz she is white there was an assumption that erm she was erm no not gonna give me any drama. I guess my friends, you know, said that they like oh is is gonna be so she’s so nice., I’m sure she’s so nice and and that did come up that she’s white and then coz she’s Canadian oh ooo she’s Canadian, its, I don’t know, it’s just different I guess for my American friends (Annalisa, Interview).

It is important to note that Annalisa is American and from Annalisa's context, White women are seen as creating less drama than any other racialised woman, I would suggest that the quote falls in line with constructions of White women.

### Racialised Desire

Issues of racialized desire occurred in 4.23% of cases was apparent in a minority of the questionnaires and only one of the interviews.

"erm most of my family, I think it's coz most of my family are red skinned, kind of thing , and I'm like my mom and myself are the darkest in our family. Erm so I've always been attracted to you know mixed race erm people especially if they have that grey eyes stuff like that oh my gosh! (Laughs), so I think it's a weakness kind of thing and also a strength." (Baldwin, Interview)

With this statement it becomes clear that the mixed race individuals that Baldwin is attracted to have both Black and White ancestry. Baldwin describes his preference as a weakness as well as strength. He continues: "It's always been either 'mixed race' or Black guys, that's just my flavour because erm there's more understanding" (Baldwin, Interview). So in part, Baldwin's preference is based on wanting to be with someone who has a shared understanding of his culture. Baldwin expands on this: 'like culturally, kind of thing, cooking wise, spices just everyday stuff.' It becomes clear that in terms of ethnicity, Baldwin wanted someone similar to himself and his family.

However, Baldwin seems to be more attracted to those with more Eurocentric features. For instance, grey eyes. In this context, grey eyes are considered important, because they symbolise Whiteness which are valued as the most desired features in a white supremacist colonised society. In this way, Baldwin is drawing on the colonised narratives around desirability.

This study supports research such as hooks (1984) and (Fanon) 2004 which detail the ways in which beauty is informed by White supremacy. In a White supremacist structure, Blackness particularly darker skin has been and is still seen as undesirable. A consequence of white supremacist beauty standards is internalised racism suffered by some persons with Black skin. Nevertheless, I think it would be simplistic to suggest that internalised racism is the only issue. Baldwin was disowned by his family, which was discussed earlier in the chapter; this could also have an effect on his preferences.

A participant from a questionnaire seemed to have internalised colonized beauty standards, 'all my same-sex relationships have been inter-racial. I look Black and I'm more attracted to women who don't look Black' (Trinidad and Panama, mixed race, female, 27). The participant self-identifies as 'mixed race', but looks Black, she stresses the fact that she only finds non-Black women attractive. When individuals make such statements, it is important to examine the messages that have shaped

such attitudes. I have stressed the colonized beauty standards as dictated by European Colonialism (hooks, 1996), what the quote demonstrates is how these colonized messages of beauty have shaped the ways in which Black participants view Blackness.

Another participant from one of the questionnaires was overt about her reasoning for her ethnic preferences, “prefer Indian partner freaky in bed” (Malawian, Chewa, lesbian, 22). Maybe the sexual experiences that she has had, has led her to believe that previous Indian partners have been more sexually compatible. However, the ways in which the participant has expressed herself, supports Said’s (2003) construction of the Orient, the participant implies that ‘freakiness’ is an innate characteristic of an ‘Indian’ identity, which becomes problematic.

With this in mind, the ethnicity in question becomes an erotic location for the other to consume. This justification over the reasoning for the preference of an Indian partner can be seen as similar to the justifications of sex tourists, who travel to specific destinations to explore their colonial fantasies (see, Ch.2 p.22). Her reasoning can also be seen as a type of Orientalism.

Racialised desire between people of colour is an underexplored phenomenon in academia but this study is able to show that White people are not necessarily needed for White supremacist thinking or

practices to take place; people of colour are also able to enforce such colonised views. Although, 'lesbian interracial relationships have not been so thoroughly examined in terms of racial objectification or the eroticization of race' (Riedell, 2007: 140), the results of this research indicates that it occurs but it is very limited. One explanation of this is that there were no explicit questions on racialised desire.

This study shed light on the ways in which people of colour internalise dominant colonial messages and racialised one another. Ultimately, this developed my own understanding of the nuances of racialised desire. It was only because of the diversity of the participants that enabled me to examine racialised desire in relation to queer people of colour. Issues of racialised desire can serve as a barrier for people who want more than just short-term relationships. During the interview, Susan, who is currently in a relationship with a South Asian queer woman detailed the steps taken in order to reassure her partner that she did not view her as a racialised object:

"Erm no, we definitely had some work to do in the beginning like I had to, erm my partner had definitely had experiences with other white folks who seemed to her like they were seeking out people of colour to date and so she was quite fearful that that would be my story as well. – (Susan, Interview)

Negative experiences with White partners has made Susan's partner fearful that Susan was pursuing her for racialised reasons. This example feed's into hooks notion of 'special knowledge' , the entitled effect that Whiteness as an ideology can have on a White people has made

Susan's partner fearful about getting involved with such partner's. As a way to combat this negative view, Susan started to educate herself on white privilege, 'I definitely had a lot of work learning about White privilege and in relation to our relationship.' Using this framework, understanding White privilege can be seen as a way of breaking down racial barriers (Kendall, 2006), they are currently together and have been for two years and ten months. This next section will address sexual racism.

### Sexual Racism

In a heterosexist world, meeting other sexual minorities can be difficult. In this study, respondents relied on online dating websites, friends and LGBTQ social groups to meet and connect with potential romantic and/or sexual partners. A number of queer people of colour reported experiencing sexual racism. Sexual racism has been defined as sexual discrimination based on 'race'. Sexual racism was made in reference to online dating websites as well as other social locations. Sexual racism manifested in a variety of social locations such as the Internet and LGBTQ social events. 8.56% of participants from both interviews and questionnaires believed that they were disregarded as potential romantic partners due to their racial origin. As one questionnaire respondent noted: "There have been numerous occasions on gay personal sites



when I have been told by a potential sexual partner that they did not find Black men attractive” (American Black gay male 33).

This issue was also a concern for queer women of colour:

“I used to use OkCupid and often ran across people that said they would rather not date people outside of their race. I didn't bother to contact them and was often disappointed because they were attractive” (American, Mixed Race, Gay, 25).

The participant in question is ‘mixed race’ and even people who identify as such, are able to experience sexual racism. In an American context, this becomes unsurprising given

America’s colonial history with the one drop rule (Moran, 2003). The one drop rule classified individuals with a drop of African heritage as Black, the legacy of the one drop rule continues today. If the ‘race’ or ethnicity of the people who rejected her were identified the information could be examined to a further degree. Sexual racism is not just limited to dating sites the respondents from questionnaires explained, “I've been told and read in dating profiles "No Blacks" or and I've felt unwelcomed at certain events” (American Black Gay 31). “When I attend White club evenings, no one approaches me to dance” (American, Black, Female, lesbian, 55). “ Went to a girls club a couple of years back and was horrified that no one spoke to me and each time I passed a coat or bag - they would check that nothing had gone missing” (British, African Caribbean, Lesbian, 53). In the above cases, racist attitudes left the participant’s feeling socially excluded. These quotes support the notion and are

examples of unconscious bias, as well as a conscious bias (see, Ch. 2 p.9).

While questionnaires gave limited examples of sexual racism, semi-structured interviews allowed me to examine the nuances and reasoning's underpinning dating preferences.

When asking how it was having an inter-racial and inter-cultural relationship, June replied:

'Erm th th the thing with inter-racial erm relationships is ideal for me because I I don't normally date black women anyway. Erm not because of any reason, I've seldom seen black women that I'm attracted to' (June, Interview).

June then listing reasons for not dating Black women:

'One- they've they've got less self – confidence

Two: they are very judgemental

Three: They don't like to see strong err women with great erm outgoing personality and erm basically just don't like another strong black woman erm and I have got no time for that. Whereas, her erm she she's very in the Black culture, not to be black, pretending to be black but she understands it' (June, Interview).

I asked her whether the reasons listed were something that June had experienced:

"No but I'll tell you because even while I was in Jamaica obviously you couldn't be open with your sexuality, so with Jamaicans, it was hard to date black women. I used to date women, but they were women that travelled and you know because of their social crowds that I was around. I was always around either mixed race people...but with black women, I don't know, (sighs) I've never really to be honest" (June, Interview). \

June, may have wanted to move away from her Jamaican heritage, if she perceives Jamaica as an overtly homonegative place, where she found difficulties in meeting Black women as potential romantic partners.

So while June states that she does not date Black women maybe there is a desire to get out of the family context due to ingrained societal homonegativity. Although, June does not go into detail, she does not have a close relationship with her biological family which may add to her reasoning of not dating Black women. In this research, a pattern became apparent, the participants who experienced sexual racism were a variety of ages and genders, but had one commonality, they self- identified as people of colour. The research demonstrates that 'natural' preferences assumed to be wholly personal are in part informed by racism. This quote supports Plummer (2007) research on sexual racism, it is not the only factors that inform June's dating preferences, as issues such as homonegativity and familial relationships were also issues.

Sexual racism was not an issue for white respondents of any genders or sexualities, the only respondents that were experiencing rejection are the participants who self- identifies as Black, reinforcing the white supremacist belief that blackness or darker skin connotes undesirability. However, unlike academic research (Plummer, 2007) in this research, sexual racism was more a concern for queer women of colour. This may be due to the gender imbalance within the study.

### Domestic Violence and Racist Abuse

The respondents in this section were in relation to the questionnaires' the disadvantage of this meant that I was unable to ask follow up questions. Both participants self-identified as Black lesbians. When asked for examples of whether their partner understood their cultural heritage, one of the participants answered, 'not always' the participant then provided the following example, 'get racial when they were upset' (American, Black, Lesbian, 44), the fact that the participant uses the term 'they' suggests that she may have had experienced racial abuse in more than one relationship. Furthermore, the participant gave 3 different lengths of relationships that she has had over the years '1 yr, 2 1/2 yrs, 3 1/2 yrs' (American, Black, Lesbian, 44). The relationships have ranged from 1 year to 3 ½ yrs. In this research, they are considered longer term relationships. Although, there is a growing body of literature on domestic violence in queer relationships (Butler, 1999; Ristock, 2002; Wendt and Zannettino, 2014), racist abuse in queer relationships is an issue which has been overlooked.

The next participant was much more detailed in her response, she describes her previous partner as being, 'straight out American White

culture, whereas I am mixed racially and culturally. That was for three years' (American, Mixed Race, Lesbian, 39) When asked whether their partner understood their cultural heritage, the participant responded:

'No, she absolutely did not. My mother is indigenous, and like many white Americans, she sort of venerated that culture, but in a vague, "don't wanna know about it" sort of way. As for my Muslim heritage, she absolutely did not understand it and was very antagonistic towards it most of the time' (American, 'Mixed Race', Lesbian, 39)

Family and friends disapproved of the relationship:

'Almost all of them uniformly disliked her but for other reasons; I hid her racism from them, as she was very careful not to say those things when anyone was around - she only said them when we were alone' (American, 'Mixed Race', Lesbian, 39).

The dislike for the participant's partner from family and friends seems to be based on the participant's partner's personality traits rather than the fact that it was an inter-racial same- sex relationship. The participant even as far as to hide her partner's racism. This is clearly an example of domestic violence more specifically, psychological abuse. The perpetrator in this case, is well aware of her actions, which is why she seems to only racially abuse her partner when they are isolated. The dominant heterosexual framework has marginalised experiences of domestic violence in same-sex relationships (Wendt and Zannettino, 2014). The domestic violence survivor in this case is further marginalised by racism, before the participant met her partner, overt racism was a common occurrence.

When asked to describe the racism that was suffered the participant explained:

'I have been refused service in restaurants/stores; shouted at; had garbage and things thrown at me or my car; assaulted; someone once tried to run my car off the road, screaming racial slurs at me. All of this happened before I met her' (American, 'Mixed Race', Lesbian, 39).

If these are the experiences that the participant has been subjected to, then maybe racism was something that she expected. Homonegativity is an issue specific to same-sex relationships. When asked whether the participant and her participant had been subjected to homonegativity the participant explained, 'yes, from people outside of the relationship'.

The participant expanded on this:

'People would snicker at her, call her "Pat" (TV character on an American comedy show whose sex is a mystery). I believe that while we were together, we had pretty decent experiences, but we've both experienced it on our own before (she's been gay bashed several times, for example)' (American, Mixed Race, Lesbian, 39).

To an extent, in this particular relationship, homonegativity is experienced as a commonality, something that they have had to live within a homonegative heterosexist society. The partner's perceived ambiguous gender identity makes her an overt target, in a world where gender is assigned from the moment of birth. The ways in which people discriminate against the partner's gender identity indicates just how rigid the gender roles in society are. Gay bashing refers to being physically or verbally assaulted for being perceived as gay. The quote demonstrates the consequences of resisting dominant norms which include physical violence. The participant was asked whether she was active within the LGBTQ community and the reasoning was given below 'yes, because it is important to me' (American, Mixed Race, Lesbian, 39). Being active

within the LGBTQ community is important to the participant; however, the quotes below demonstrate her disappointments, 'the community in general is clueless about or hostile towards people of Middle Eastern/South Asian/Muslim heritage. I almost never talk about this background to people within the community' (American, Mixed Race, Lesbian, 39). The participant identifies as a Muslim; however, it is clear that the community that she is involved with does not perceive her as such, this has meant that she is subjected to Islamophobia, which is prevalent white-dominated queer spaces (Ch.2 p.10).

The community's hostile racist environment has led to the isolation of this particular participant. Have you experienced any racism from the LGBTQ community? 'I almost never talk about this background to people within the community, so thus far, I have never experienced racism' (American, 'mixed race', Lesbian, 39).

Interestingly, the participant does not believe that she has experienced racism from the community, however, she cannot discuss her ethnic background because of the Islamophobia within the LGBTQ community, I argue that she has indeed suffered from racism. The racist actions expressed by the very community who are supposed to be supporting her, have led to her to erase racial aspects of her identity.

As the participant is in a psychologically violent relationship, she has limited support. A combination of societal homonegativity and heterosexism has meant that domestic violence in a same-sex

relationship is marginalised (Butler, 1999; Ristock, 2002; Wendt and Zannettino, 2014). Also, the apparent racism within the participant's specific LGBTQ organisation and the fact that the participant protects her family from her partner's racism has meant that the participant has very little means of support. If the participant did bring the violent situation to the attention of members in the LGBTQ community she may not be taken seriously, since they adhere to similar perspectives as the perpetrator, in the context of race. Ultimately, my research has identified examples of the ways in which, domestic violence can manifest itself in long term inter-racial and/or inter-cultural same-sex relationships, and how queer people of colour are disproportionately affected by such relationships.

### Racism in the LGBTQ Community

The last section of the racism chapter explores experiences within the White –dominated LGBTQ community. 36% of respondents from the questionnaires and 60% of interviewees all of whom were queer people of colour subjected to racism within the White-dominated LGBTQ Community.

One of the questionnaire respondent's took offence to how the question was constructed, the response is highlighted "LGBTQ community are worded as if they are different from me. They are my friends and family,



so to ask if they are supportive is like asking if my mum loves me” (British, white, homosexual, 30). This response demonstrates privilege a type of privilege, which is only afforded to certain members of the community, such as those who identify as White (McIntosh, 1988; Frankenburg, 1993; Delgado and Stefancic, 1997). In this instance, privilege causes the participant to miss instances of racism.

Another type of privilege is demonstrated in the participant’s final sentence. This particular participant is fortunate enough to have a loving parent. As this research has shown, many queer individuals face familial homonegativity and rejection (Stevens, 2012). In this context, her privileges cause her to overlook such issues.

For many other respondents, specifically people of colour, racism in the LGBTQ community left them isolated, when asked how supportive the LGBTQ community had been, one respondent from the questionnaire suggested, “about as helpful as a blind man on a scavenger hunt” (American Luso-African/Cuban, gay 30). On one level the quote above demonstrates how unsupportive the participant has felt within the LGBTQ community. On another level, it shows how causal discrimination can be, something which is apparent within the LGBTQ community. Racism was not the only prejudice within the LGBTQ community; other respondents found that transphobia and biphobia were endemic within the White-dominated LGBTQ community. Many would like to be more active within the community but felt as though there was

no support. When asked whether they were active within the LGBTQ community responses stated, “I am again now, as there is nothing in Birmingham for LGBTQ people of colour” (British, African Caribbean, Lesbian, 48) this particular respondent went on to suggest:

“I have stayed away from the LGBTQ community in Birmingham for many years as there has been an underlying current of racism...” and this included “Cultural events being ignored, Birmingham Pride not giving space for our cultural entertainment, being left waiting for service at bars till white customers are served, being searched more thoroughly by security etc... That's how racism manifests itself these days” (British, African Caribbean, lesbian, 48).

Maybe her racial experiences have led to her become active in order to make sure that future activities are more racially inclusive. Like previous research, it indicates racism in the LGBTQ community reflects the larger white supremacist colonial structure, and other respondents in predominantly white areas also detailed their experiences:

“Once, a guy walked past me with his friends. The club was quite full and there wasn't much space to move, so when he walked past me he brushed my arm with his. He started saying "eew im gonna turn black" whilst rubbing his arm and the people around us started laughing” (American, ‘Mixed Race’, Lesbian 23).

“I got called a Black bitch at a club in Vauxhall, that's the only example” (British, Black, Lesbian, 39). Racism can also be indirect and results in isolation, as this next participant asserts, ‘feeling alone in White queer spaces, like left out or sticking out like a sore thumb. (British, Bengali, bi-queer, 24). The next respondent, who self-identifies as an American Woman, feels more supported by a White community, “very supportive in a mostly White community, very unsupportive in a mostly Black community” (African American Bisexual, 37). Although the respondent

makes distinctions in each community and describes the white community as very supportive, the participant then goes in to detail the racism that she suffers when in white -dominated LGBTQ communities, which included, “racist comments from Whites, and objectification” (African American, female, bisexual, 37).

When others sought support from LGBTQ professionals, they were left disappointed, as this next participant suggests, “no understanding went to LGBT counsellor - was ignorant and negative about my faith and culture” (British, Pakistani, lesbian 42).

Islamophobia prevents Muslims from receiving adequate support.

Creating more inclusive and diverse queer communities would allow room to grow for an alternative vision.

### Summary.

The findings indicate that racism remains a serious issue in society, White supremacist thinking is rife in society and has informed how people perceive each other. Ultimately, it has rendered people of colour as inferior and White people as superior, this in turn, as meant that people of colour experience racism. Participant responses were used to demonstrate the ways in which racism negatively impacted them, while racism mostly privileges individuals with white/lighter skin. People of colour can also be seen as internalising White supremacist thought.

Racism manifested itself in different ways and was not always seen as negative by the person in a privileged position, for example, racialised desire. Moreover, the effects of such practices were not even considered by the person in the privileged position, for instance, sexual racism. Ultimately, racism can be seen as preventing individuals' from forming inter-racial relationships as there was mistrust. When individuals of different backgrounds did get together there were assumptions made which were based on white supremacist thought. The LGBTQ community was experienced as a haven for cisgender white queer men but as a site of racial erasure for queer people of colour.

## **Chapter 6: Homonegativity.**

This chapter will examine the impact that homonegativity has on participants as well as those in inter-racial and/or inter-cultural same-sex relationships. Homonegativity remains a serious issue (Stonewall, 2013). The results generated from the questionnaires suggested 77.1% of respondents had experienced some form of homonegativity, while 22.9% of respondents did not feel they experienced homonegativity. Of the 22.9%, 14.4% of participants self-identified as White and 8.5% were what I define as persons of colour. Moreover, 100% of interviewees reported being subjected to a form homonegativity.

### **Queer Women and Homonegativity**

There are different types of homonegativity that negatively impact queer individuals in a variety of ways. The homonegativity directed at queer women can be combination of homonegativity, racism and sexism. Below are some of the examples take from questionnaires, of the types of verbal abuse that queer women receive:

"Fucking dykes"

"I'll fuck you right up"

"I'll give you something you'll never forget, it'll turn you straight"

"Why don't you make out in front of me, I'm horny"

And the well-meaning "Wouldn't it just be easier to not hold hands in public, dear?" (British, White, pansexual, 27).

We were in McDonald's and a group of teenage boy's started joking around and were shouting "pussy munchers" at us' (British, half Jamaican and half Arab, Lesbian, 23). The statements reflect the vulnerabilities of hegemonic heterosexual masculinity (Kimmel, 1994; Connell, 2005). The threats of rape are being used as a form of control. I would suggest that the verbal abuse directed at queer women becomes a way for heterosexual men to reaffirm their masculinity through rape. These events could be detrimental to their mental well-being. Research conducted by Stevens (2012) indicates that substance abuse is a major problem in LGBTQ populations, which could be explained by homonegativity. Queer populations face persecution, family rejection and stigma. . Very little was found on how this type of homonegativity impacted on queer intimate relationships.

### Familial Homonegativity

Many respondents reported being subjected to homonegativity from family members, 'the only thing I can remember is going to a Christmas party of my family on my father's side and they were continuously watching us' (Belgian, White, gay, 28). As this response derived from a questionnaire, I was unable to ask follow up questions. The reasons for

the family watching them is unclear, it could be due to the homonegativity or racism or maybe both. The quote below demonstrates the extent to which some families were willing to risk in order to keep a heteronormative family structure. Ultimately attitudes from familial homonegativity caused the breakup of relationships:

My partner's family was very disapproving of my partner being true to herself. They never came over to our place and I was never invited to any family functions. I was barely acknowledged. It made the relationship hard and was the reason we eventually ended things (American, White, female, lesbian, 34)

Familial Homonegativity caused the breakdown of this particular relationship. The majority of homonegativity that Susan, an interviewee encountered was directed through her partner's family, as Susan explains:

"Yes I would say that the most predominantly I've experienced homophobia is through my partner's family erm I haven't met my parent's parents and they do not want to meet me and they're very ashamed of the fact that their daughters gay and in a relationship. So, erm we've brought a house together, we plan on building a family together, we plan on having kids so this is all like a very real way in which homophobia affects both of us, it really affects my partner in a very real way but also by extension it also affects me erm I would check her brother and sister in law and they have a son so we have spent some time with them but it's increasingly getting weird in that they know me and that they don't invite both of us to let's say their son's birthday party erm and then her parents called and said she's not coming, making sure that I won't be there erm and they refused to kind of tell that side of family so yeah definitely experienced a lot of homophobia by extension through my partner's family erm and I would say that that's the biggest and most profound way I've ever experienced homophobia. I have a really excepting err family ...I'm often called a fag by some car driving by but that's probably the worst kind of you know the worst kind that I've experienced but definitely through her parents my partner's parents" (Susan, Interview).

When asked about the experience of having a same-sex relationship, Alesha responded:

'let's just say I was homophobic and I wasn't into it until I fell in love with her, that is when I was open, so this is what love is... it felt like love... The religious side of it, erm I felt guilty, me

being a Muslim, obviously it is forbidden erm and my sin was obviously acting upon the love I felt for her and so yes that was my fault' (Alesha, Interview).

Same-sex attraction has left Alesha with feelings of guilt because of the ways in which religion has been used and interpreted as inherently homonegative (Kugle, 2010), this perception was not limited to Alesha, and the couple's homonegative families left both partners' conflicted, for instance:

'It made the relationship difficult for us to be together, for us to be comfortable. I mean we always had the guilt at the back of our heads, that we are not meant to be together, but yeah it made me very insecure to the point where I was like you know if my mom found out she would actually disown me, like so is this relationship good for me?' (Alesha, Interview).

In this example, being part of an inter-cultural same-sex relationship meant she has to make a choice between being with the person that she loves or face disownment by her immediate family. Research suggests that disownment is common in relation to sexual minorities (Stevens, 2014). This disownment from immediate family can result in homelessness which is an issue that disproportionately affects queer people of colour. For Alesha, she is not only forced to choose between her family or same-sex relationship, but has to think about stability. Age becomes an important component in this context since; Alesha is an 18 year old woman who is about to start University. Ultimately, external pressure from both sets of parents and siblings ended the relationship:



'Her sister snitched to her mom about the relationship and that didn't go too well with the mom. She wasn't very happy about it, obviously her daughter was with another girl, obviously coming from an afro Caribbean cultural perspective... her younger sister started calling her names like you dirty lesbian and just obviously horrible stuff' (Alesha, Interview).

### Homonegativity and Public Affection

The consequences of heterosexism and homonegativity within society, results in same-sex couples negotiating safe spaces to which they can show affection:

"She was nervous about public expressions of affection especially when there were other Black people around or when around family. So we just didn't hold hands, hug or kiss or touch affectionately around family (British, Middle Eastern, Lesbian, 40).

The participant in question deconstructs notions of Middle Eastern cultures being inherently homonegative as the participant seems to be very open about her sexual orientation. I would also suggest that her previous partner may invest time within Black communities and does not want to disappoint them by 'coming out'. The participant expands on this and suggests:

Just when my ex was nervous because of worry about what other people; strangers or family members would think. She was not comfortable being Out in those settings. I guess she had an element of homophobia herself (British, Middle Eastern, Lesbian, 40).

In Western societies, it is common for sexual minorities to 'come out', in other words disclose their sexual orientation. If an individual does not follow this procedure then it is deemed that they are suffering from

internalised homonegativity, which I would argue is very Eurocentric and simplistic. What is less discussed is the discrimination involved, if a person does decide to come out. For Alesha, an interviewee, 'coming out' would mean losing her family, 'my mom's very homophobic, it's completely forbidden in my religion, so we don't even speak of the word in my erm family, so if she found out, I'd be dead (Alesha, Interview).'

When asked what she thought drove homophobia Alesha explained:

'I mean from my mom's point of view I believe, no religion prohibits the act, acting whereas the hate, religion doesn't force you to hate homosexual people, religion clearly states that. It's a sin to act upon it, but the love is innocent but I feel like it is culture and tradition that drives the hate along with her family as well, It's the culture you know, man was made for woman and erm let's just say her parents are very like erm black power type parents, so it's like a man was made for woman. How can a woman and a woman type thing' (Alesha, Interview).

It becomes clear that religion has been interpreted as being inherently homonegative.

### Summary of Chapter

In this chapter, I provided a detailed overview about the main findings on homonegativity. These themes were used in order to demonstrate how issues of homonegativity were experienced by the participants' and interviewees. These themes demonstrated the ways in which individuals in inter-racial and/or inter-cultural relationships navigate themselves in a racist, sexist, heterosexist and homonegativity world. Homonegativity had a tremendous impact on participants' lived experiences this included risking crucial relationships with family and friends for romantic love. Some Individuals in inter-racial and/or inter-cultural relationships had little choice but to end the relationship, since the external social pressure was just too much to bear. But this was not the case for all couples. Other couples chose to remain together and fight through the heterosexism and homonegativity that they encountered. In the following

chapter, I will conclude, discuss the limitations and discuss areas where further research is needed.

## **Chapter 7: Conclusion.**

This research set out to explore the experiences of those who are in or have previously been in an inter-racial and/or inter-cultural same-sex relationship. I used Hooks' notion of White supremacy to detail the ways in which queer people of all colours can be complicit in White supremacist thinking. I also argued that racism and homonegativity are legacies of European Colonialism. The research questions will be answered in the section that follows:

Participants of colour living in Western societies were disproportionately affected by overt racism regardless of age and social class. As people of colour are not a homogenous group, they experienced racism in a variety of ways. For instance, Muslim participants were subjected to racism which was informed by Islamophobia, while Black participants were affected by anti-Black racism. This clearly had a negative impact on their mental health. Institutional racism in mental health services meant that they were further marginalised. White respondents who were ethnically Irish also felt discriminated against. While White European respondents did not report incidents of individual or institutional racism, they reported feeling higher experiences of racial prejudice when in inter-racial same-sex relationships. It is important to contextualise why this may be the case. In a White supremacist society, Whiteness is

privileged. There were no significant differences in terms of age and social class.

The majority of respondents in this study were subjected to homonegativity. The homonegativity participants were exposed to was gendered and racialised. For instance, homonegative terms were culturally specific. Moreover, for queer people of faith, religion was reported as being incompatible with religious beliefs. Feelings of isolation can be minimised if such issues are taken into consideration, within the context of mental health services and LGBTQ communities. Again, there were no significant differences in terms of age and social class.

Not only did participants suffer discrimination in individual contexts, but also as couples. To a large extent, racism and homonegativity had a negative impact on inter-racial same-sex relationships and also a specific type of inter-cultural same-sex couple (where both partners are perceived as people of colour). Some queer people of colour discussed issues of racialised desire which was apparent in the beginning of inter-racial same-sex relationships. This made some people of colour hesitant about getting involved with White partners. The findings also shed light on racial abuse within the context of intimate inter-racial same-sex relationships. . People of colour were subjected to racial abuse by their non-black same-sex partners. This impact of such abuse may be minimised, if domestic violence services take such abuse as seriously

as other forms. Homonegativity was the primary concern for White partners in inter-cultural same-sex relationships.

The last research question entailed discussing whether or not people who have been in longer- term relationships or in very brief relationships have different experiences of racism and homonegativity, however, the relationships were too nuanced to make an overall conclusion, and the experiences were dependant on the people involved. For instance, racism was an issue that some people of colour in inter-cultural same-sex relationships faced together, for others, racism was an issue that caused friction. In contrast, racism was not an issue for white inter-cultural same-sex couples. However, both types of couples saw homonegativity as a shared oppression.

This research has also found how white supremacist thinking manifests itself in relationships between people of colour. In addition, this research found that the LGBTQ community was an essential site for making friends as well as campaigning for queer issues that were deemed important to the respondents; however, it was also seen as a site of exclusion. The LGBTQ community was a place where many people of colour felt excluded, regardless of whether or not they were in an inter-racial and/or inter-cultural same-sex relationship. The LGBTQ community need to embed measures to make sure all queer individuals in the population are respected. This was also the site where some White respondents were subjected to racism by

association. Despite the prevalence of racism and homonegativity, my findings suggested inter-racial and/or inter-cultural same- sex relationships were also sites where some respondents started to examine race such as White privilege in meaningful ways. For instance, being part of an inter-racial and/or inter-cultural relationship made some White participants develop a consciousness which contributed to them educating themselves on white privilege, in order to improve their current relationships.

#### Limitations of the study

Most of the participants were from Western nations, so the study was only able to detail Western experiences. More than a quarter of participants skipped the social class question which was unsurprising given the diversity of the participants in the study, this meant that could not identify meaningful patterns could not be identified on the basis of social class. Moreover, even though I explicitly stated the research included Trans inter-racial and/or inter-cultural relationships, again, I did not get enough responds to make any meaningful patterns.

#### Recommendations for further research

The findings enabled me to recommend further research in the following areas: I would suggest a longitudinal study using narrative story telling may be more suited for this type of study. Using narrative story telling



would enable researchers to explore such experiences in detail. I also think it is important to research inter-racial and/or inter-cultural relationships in all their forms, such as inter-racial and/or inter-cultural same-sex polyamorous relationships as well as Trans inter-racial and/or inter-cultural same-sex relationships. However, researchers may encounter similar problems, in trying to contact such a hidden population. The research was able to uncover racial abuse which I define as an aspect of domestic violence, more needs to be done by scholars, LGBTQ communities and Black organisations, in order to give individuals the support they require, which may leave them feeling less isolated.

The findings suggested that racism is rife in White- dominated LGBT communities, such organisations need to implement ways on how to tackle racism within their communities, in order to make it more inclusive for queer people of colour, and this should include educating community members on the different types of racism, such as racialized desire and sexual racism and White privilege.

I hope that this adds to the growing body of research on inter-racial and/or inter-cultural same-sex relationships. Academic research as well as visibility in local LGBTQ communities may enhance the ways in which individuals in such relationships are perceived and ultimately treated.

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## **Appendices.**

### **Appendix 1: Draft Questionnaire Questions for Participants currently in an Inter-racial and/or Inter-cultural same Sex Relationship**

#### **Questionnaire**

This project aims to explore individual experiences of an inter-racial and/or inter-cultural same sex relationship. The research will also include non-heterosexual, inter-racial and/or inter-cultural transgender (e.g. black transgender man partnered with a white transgender man) relationships. The questionnaire should take between 15-20 minutes.

Given the anonymous nature of this questionnaire, you will not be able to withdraw your responses. However, a summary of the results will be available at: (link) from (date) to (date).

The information provided by you in this questionnaire will be used for research purposes only.

- This study is for over 18s only. Please confirm that you are over 18 (compulsory question- the other questions are optional).

Yes                      No

- Nationality:
- Sex:
- Ethnic background:
- Sexual orientation:
- Social Class:
- Age:
- Are you in an inter-racial (e.g. one white partner and one black partner) same sex relationship?

- Are you in an inter-cultural (two partners who may both be perceived as black but who come from different cultural backgrounds) same sex relationship?
- How would you define the relationship?  
(e.g. White British partner with a British Indian partner)
- How did you meet your partner?
- how long have you been together?
- Do you feel your current partner understands your cultural heritage/ experience? And why?
- Can you give me some examples?
- How did family and friends react to this relationship?
- Have you or your partner been subjected to any racism? Who from?
  - Can you give me an example of the racism you have suffered?
  - Have you or your partner been subjected to any homophobia? Who from?
  - Can you give me an example of the homophobia that you have suffered?
  - Are you active within the LGBT community? Why?
  - How supportive have the LGBT community been?
  - Have you experienced any racism from the LGBT community?
  - Can you give me some examples?

If you would like to participate in an interview, please email me at [dnd724@bham.ac.uk](mailto:dnd724@bham.ac.uk).  
All contact details from potential interviewees will remain confidential

This research project has been approved by the University of Birmingham's Research Ethics Review Committee.

Below is a list of organisations that participants may find useful:

Birmingham LGBT: <http://www.blgbt.org/>

People in Harmony: <http://www.pih.org.uk/>

UK Black Pride: <http://www.ukblackpride.org.uk/>

Rainbow Noir: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/rainbownoir/?ref=ts&fref=ts>

Gender Matters: <http://gender-matters.org.uk/>

## **Appendix 2: Questionnaire designed for those who have previously been involved in an inter-racial and/or inter-cultural same sex relationship.**

### Questionnaire

This project aims to explore individual experiences of an inter-racial and/or inter- cultural same sex relationship. The research will also include non- heterosexual, inter-racial and/ or inter-cultural transgender (e.g. black transgender man partnered with a white transgender man) relationships The questionnaire should take between 15-20 minutes

Given the anonymous nature of this questionnaire, you will not be able to withdraw your responses. However, a summary of the results will be available at: (link) from (date) to (date)

The information provided by you in this questionnaire will be used for research purposes only.

- This study is for over 18s only. Please confirm that you are over 18 (compulsory question- the other questions are optional).

Yes

No

- Nationality:
- Sex:
- Ethnic background:
- Sexual orientation:
- Social Class:
- Age:

- Have you been in an inter-racial (e.g. one white partner and one black partner) same sex relationship?
- Have you been in an inter-cultural (two partners who may both be perceived as black but who come from different cultural backgrounds) same sex relationship?
- How would you define the relationship?(e.g. White British partner with a British Indian partner)
  - How did you meet your partner?
  - How long did the relationship last?
  - Did you feel your partner understood your cultural heritage/ experience? And why?
  - Can you give me some examples?
  - How did family and friends react to this relationship?
- Have you or your partner been subjected to any racism? Who from?
  - Can you give me an example of the racism that you have suffered?
  - Have you or your partner been subjected to any homophobia? Who from?
  - Can you give me an example of the homophobia that you have suffered?
  - Are you active within the LGBT community? Why?
  - How supportive have the LGBT community been?
  - Have you experienced any racism from the LGBT community?
  - Can you give me some examples?

If you would like to participate in an interview, please email me at [REDACTED]  
All contact details from potential interviewees will remain confidential

This research project has been approved by the University of Birmingham's Research Ethics Review Committee.

Below is a list of organisations that participants may find useful:

Birmingham LGBT: <http://www.blgbt.org/>

People in Harmony: <http://www.pih.org.uk/>

UK Black Pride: <http://www.ukblackpride.org.uk/>

Rainbow Noir: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/rainbownoir/?ref=ts&fref=ts> Gender

Matters: <http://gender-matters.org.uk/>

### **Appendix 3: Indicative Questions**

#### Indicative questions

This interview is going to be constructed and developed so that it's suitable for people to answer whether they are talking about a relationship they are no longer in, or a relationship that they are currently in and there will be options for people to follow different paths – but these will be the questions.

- Participant's sexual orientation, age, 'race' etc
- What is/was your partner's race, age, and ethnicity?
- How long have you been in the relationship?
- How did you meet your partner?
- How was it for you, having an inter-racial and/ or inter-cultural relationship?
- Were any assumptions made about the relationship? Please give details?
- Have you experienced racism?
- Can you give me some examples?
- What was that like?
- How do you think that impacted on your partner?
- Have you experienced homophobia?
- Can you give me some examples?
- What do you think drove that?
- How did that impact on you?
- How do you think that impacted on your partner?
- What have your experiences been in the LGBT community?
- How supportive have the LGBT community been?
- Have you experienced any racism from the LGBT community?
- Can you give me some examples?



## **Appendix 4: Participant Information Sheet**

### **Participant Information Sheet**

#### **Inter-racial and Inter-cultural Same Sex Couples**

MPhil Project, Danielle DeLeon, University of Birmingham

#### **About the researcher**

I am a 'mixed race' queer feminist and researcher, doing my MPhil at the University of Birmingham. My study is motivated by the lack of academic research on inter-racial and/or inter-cultural same sex relationships.

#### **Focus of the study**

This project aims to explore people's experiences of an inter-racial and/or inter-cultural same sex relationship. The research will also include non-heterosexual, inter-racial and/or inter-cultural transgender (e.g. black transgender man partnered with a white transgender man) relationships. In particular the research seeks to answer the following questions:

To what extent do racism and homophobia impact on the relationships of inter-racial and/or inter-cultural same sex couples?

To what extent do men and women and individuals from different racial/ethnic groups, ages and social classes experience homophobia and racism differently?

Do people, who have been in longer term relationships or in very brief relationships, have different experiences of racism and homophobia?

#### **What will you be required to do?**

You will be invited to participate in an individual interview. The aim of the interview is to hear your experiences of being in an inter-racial and/or inter-ethnic relationship. The interviews are for over 18s only.

#### **Place and duration of interview**

The interview will take place at the LGBT well-being centre or via Skype, and will last for up to 1 hour. You will be able to take as many breaks as necessary during this time. All interviews will be audio recorded.

#### **Consent and right to withdraw**

You are free to withdraw participation at any point, without giving a reason for leaving. You also have the right to refuse to answer as many questions as you wish. You will have a month from the interview date to withdraw your data. Participation is voluntary.

### **Data storage**

The raw data will be stored on a secure data stick and University file; it will not be passed on to anyone in future for personal use of any kind. I shall be responsible for the information when the study is over. I will ensure that it is stored safely in its original format and in accordance with the University of Birmingham's Codes of Practice for Research. The material will be held for ten years from the completion of the study and will then be destroyed.

### **Confidentiality**

Confidentiality will be protected for all by following certain steps. For example, during the discussion of data, names will be changed. I will anonymise all data after the interviews have taken place.

### **Rights to information**

If participants wish they will be given a chance to check their data. As the data will be anonymous, they can ensure that nothing is included which may identify them. Also, a summary of the research will be made available to the participant through a website, as well as a copy of any publications resulting from the research, if desired.

### **Further queries**

If there are any other questions, do not hesitate to contact me, Danielle DeLeon through 



Below is a list of organisations that participants may find useful:

Birmingham LGBT: <http://www.blgbt.org/>

People in Harmony: <http://www.pih.org.uk/>

UK Black Pride: <http://www.ukblackpride.org.uk/>

Rainbow Noir: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/rainbownoir/?ref=ts&fref=ts> Gender

Matters: <http://gender-matters.org.uk/>

## **Appendix 5: Consent Form.**

### **Consent form for the study: Inter-racial and/or Inter-cultural Same Sex Couples**

**Please answer the following questions by marking the appropriate column:**

<b>Questions :</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Have you read and understood the information sheet about this study?		
Have you been able to ask questions about this study?		
Have you received enough information about this study?		
Do you understand that you have a month from the proposed interview date, to withdraw from the study?		
Do you consent to have your interview voice recorded?		
Do you agree to take part in this study?		
Do you consent to the interview taking place via Skype?		
Do you consent to the location of the interview taking place at the LGBT well-being centre?		
Are you over 18?		

Your signature will certify that you have voluntarily decided to take part in this research study having read and understood the information in the sheet for participants. It will also certify that you have had adequate opportunity to discuss the study with an investigator and that all questions have been answered to your satisfaction.

**Signature of participant:**..... **Date:**.....

**Name (block letters):**.....

**Signature of investigator:**..... **Date:**.....

Please keep your copy of the consent form and the information sheet together

Danielle DeLeon